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THE YEAR

Society G2 pages 12-13

the west of the formerly partitioned city. But the official statistics underplay the scale of the crimes and the ways in which the overall social climate allows for the tacit toleration of racist thuggery. "We don't categorise feelings of revulsion against foreigners as extreme right," said a Brandenburg police spokesman. When neo-Nazis stabbed and kicked a 17-year-old, turn to page 3, column 1.

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Sketch

Laundering and a spring clear-out



Simon Hoggart

ABOUT MPs struggled yesterday to dredge the subject round to the £1 million the Tories apparently received from a Hong Kong drugs baron, a Dr Fu Manchou or some such. This story has everything for them — dangerous narcotics, sinister orientals and Tory sleaze.

It also has the merit of making the row over tobacco sponsorship for Formula One look pretty trivial. Best of all, it features one of their favourite hate figures, Mr David Mellor, who is alleged to have acted as an intermediary. (I must be careful what I write about Mr Mellor. If I riled, he might turn ugly.)

Luckily for Labour, two MPs had — a few weeks ago — tabled questions for answer yesterday about government strategy on drugs. Hugh Bayley (Lab, York) demanded the Tories give "this dirty money" back.

Ann Taylor, the Leader of the House, announced that she and her colleagues had "been concerned, to put it mildly, by reports about the sources of their funding". She said "concerned" in the manner of the Casablanca police chief who was "shocked" to find gambling in Rick's Bar. I.e. thrilled, delighted, gob-smacked with pleasure.

She switched tack. The Tories should not give the loot back to Dr Fu Manchou, but to a drugs-related charity instead. Or, I missed, why not to the Labour Party, to compensate for the million quid they had to give back to Bernie Ecclestone? The thing about "dirty" money is that it's still money.

The Tories may feel they got off lightly yesterday. I am sure they will be diligent and make more of Geoffrey Robinson today.

Yesterday was also the day when Mr Richard Price (Herts SW) launched his bill to reduce the number of MPs at

Westminster by around 200. As Mr Price pointed out, this was like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas. Or, he might have added, cows to vote for Jack Cunningham, or miners for Arthur Scargill.

Times had changed, Mr Price said. What with devolution, and the European commission becoming more powerful by the day, there was less and less for Westminster to do. Fewer MPs would work more efficiently and have better facilities.

At the end of his speech, the House, by its almost total silence, gave the bill a first reading. MPs were busy reacting like commuters when a car in the community loony gets on and starts shouting. Their faces redden, their papers rustle as if caught in a zephyr, and they just pray he'll shut up and go away. And of course the bill will die, tragically unmentioned, like a homeless waif in Boots's doorway.

But I think the bill is a splendid idea. Two hundred may be too few. With devolution, you could get rid of 72 from Scotland and 40 from Wales straight away. Then if there's a Northern Ireland settlement, that's another 18 gone. I could name in my sleep another 70 who wouldn't be missed. Douglas Hogg? Teresa Gorman? Gerald Howarth? Every "Blair Babe" who has asked a creepy question!

The Scots will be especially not missed. Once a month they have their own question time, in which MPs can inquire about matters which should be of no concern at all to what some people still call The Imperial Parliament.

Yesterday they chuntered on about ferry services between Gourock and Dunoon, and between Ballycastle and Campbelltown — all important to people who live in those places but of no concern to the rest of us. I don't expect my MP to demand answers about the E37 bus from the Minister of Transport.

Tories had been bussed in from the leafy glades of England just to show a presence. So we had questions from the Brains of Tewkesbury, the Glens of Hatteridge, and the heather-girt lochs of Sevenoaks. This is quite ludicrous, and the sooner we have Scottish independence, the better, for us all.

More questions than government answers as European delegation unable to visit slaughter village

Blood runs cold in Algeria

Ian Black reports from Sidi Hamad, where whole families were massacred

SIDI HAMMAD'S young men were enjoying a quiet Ramadan evening with a dubbed Bruce Lee video when the attack began with a bomb blast and a hail of gunfire: a bloody palm print still stains the bullet-pocked walls of the disused garage that served as a village hall.

It was about 8.30, not long after the festive iftar meal that ends the Muslim fast, when the killers struck, arriving from at least three points and moving from house to house to select their victims.

Yahya Belhout was lucky. He was out when the terrorists entered the breeze-block compound where his family lived around a central courtyard. The bare earth is stained dark with dried blood.

"People came out of their houses because they heard the shooting and that's when the terrorists broke in," he said yesterday, his eyes downcast, his face pale under the sunburn and stubble.

Yahya lost everyone in a few minutes of frenzied butchery: his father Qador, aged 78, was killed and his wife Umm al-Kheir kidnapped, presumed murdered.

Mahmad, 30, his pregnant wife Sadiya, 28, Karim, seven, and Khadija, just two, all had their throats cut.

Afterwards, the attackers burned the house by igniting the butane gas used for cooking, leaving the kitchen a mess of ashes and broken plates. Torn and singed pages of an elementary school maths textbook — probably Karim's — litter the floor.

"It all lasted for about an hour and a half and then the army came and the terrorists ran off," explained Yahya's friend Jamal Rinchayeb. "No body knows why the soldiers took so long to get here."



Security men in Algiers inspect the wreckage of a bus after a bomb attack yesterday killed one person and injured 23

There were similar horrors next door, where Hussein Marah, a stone-mason, lost his 12-year-old brother and his father, a veteran of the war against the French.

He was still in shock 10 days after that terrible night and moved zombie-like around the ruins.

"Beasts," he muttered, a neighbour, pointing to a spot where he piled up 15 of the 100-odd bodies.

Sidi Hamad is a grim place of colourless poverty relieved only by a single bougainvillea spilling over a wall and a few overgrown cacti in rusting oil drums.

Yet it is no isolated hamlet that determined guerrillas can attack at will by outwitting overstretched security forces. It is 20 minutes drive south of central Algiers, and 10 minutes at most from the heavily guarded perimeter of the international airport.

Whatever happened to soldiers at the nearby base, less than a mile away across the fields, is unclear, as is so much about this atrocity. The only certainties are to be found at the village cemetery.

It was perhaps fortunate that there was room to expand the graveyard beyond the old fence into a new rect-

angle that now houses row after row of new graves. Empty graves await those who will die in hospital.

Algerian officials say it is hard to reconstruct the circumstances of the Sidi Hamad deaths, part of a toll of as many as 75,000 since 1992, and which they blame on the Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

"All massacres are different," said a senior diplomat in the capital. "But the savagery is always unbelievable."

Salah Bousaid, deputy prefect for the Mifrah area, was on hand yesterday to explain what the government believed to be the truth.

Conspicuous in his dark suit and neat beard, Mr Bousaid had at least some partial answers. "People are very emotional and they dramatise things in this sort of situation. Ten terrorists become 100 and five minutes turn into an hour. It's always the same. First the killers have beards and then they are clean shaven. First they are wearing blue then green. When your wife and children have just had their throats slit that's what happens."

"What we think is that there were about 60 terrorists and the army arrived about 20 minutes after the attack

Bus bomb kills one as troika flies home

ALGERIA yesterday rebuffed a European Union attempt to help stem the country's continuing carnage as a bomb attack blamed on Islamist terrorists hit the capital, and further killings were reported in the countryside, writes Ian Black.

Ahmed Attaf, Algeria's foreign minister, told Britain's Foreign Office minister, Derek Fatchett, and colleagues from Luxembourg and Austria that his country did not need outside help.

Mr Fatchett complained that the delegation had not been able to visit victims or their families.

Just before the ministers flew out after a stay of less than 24 hours, a bomb destroyed a bus in Algiers's Ben Aknoun quarter, killing one passenger and wounding 23.

Algeria rejected offers of help for thousands of people left homeless or traumatised by violence that has claimed more than 1,100 lives this year.

It also refused to accept an EU request for an invitation to two United Nations monitors against a background of suspicion of official passivity or even complicity in some of the killings.

Some of them [the killers] must have been local and are probably known to our security services. You can't come to a place like this without knowing it well."

European Union ministers did not go to Sidi Hamad yesterday because of what their hosts told them were pressures of time and security.

"Algerians are proud people and we don't want European help," said the prefect. "There are people here who reject assistance from their own government. How can they accept it from foreigners?"

Review

Southern dreams and discomfort

Eddie Gibb

Glass Menagerie
Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh

THE fire escape outside the Winton's apartment, which in Tennessee see Williams's play doubles as a kind of inner-city veranda, is overlooked by a giant advertising hoarding. It's close enough to see that the neon letters are bolted to an ugly, functional iron skeleton, which represents the scaffolding that supports the American Dream.

The flashing neon serves as a constant reminder of the family's lowly position: people who are down on their luck precisely because others are flush. This is not at all where Amanda, a former prom queen, planned to raise a family.

Polly Teale, who directed an acclaimed version of Jane Eyre at the Young Vic last year, has been well served by the stage design which captures the sense of cramped lives, both physically and emotionally, while hinting at the good times rolling in the outside world. To combat this claustrophobia, brother and sister simply imagine themselves somewhere else, as a way of escaping their mother's poisoning disappointment.

Laura retreats to a fantasy world populated by glass animals, while Tom takes in a movie and imagines himself as a merchant seaman.

As Tom, Alec Newman cracks early — possibly too early. But it's a tough part, as he is both protagonist and narrator, flawed hero and "bastard son of a bastard". Finding

the right balance is the central problem for any production of *The Glass Menagerie*, and it is not achieved entirely successfully here.

Mother (Lois Baxter) has as irritating an effect on the audience as she does on her offspring, which is not necessarily criticism. But by straying towards caricature of the cracked Southern Belle, she shows little of the character's self-awareness that she is driving her children down, but can't help herself.

When Laura and the Gentleman Caller, Monica Dolan appears as the 24-year-old girl who is still waiting for her life to begin. By turning her toes in and shuffling about the stage in short, bird-like steps, she is utterly convincing as someone doubly crippled by shyness and a gammy leg. While Tom explodes with frustration, Dolan employs economical stillness which ensures the audience sees this dysfunctional family through Laura's eyes.

The real power of this production is in the lengthy scene between Laura and Jim, a friend of her brother on whom she has had a crush since high school. Matthew Pidgeon is all gentlemanly manners with a pocketful of tricks for breaking the ice. For a few brief minutes Laura lights up and becomes almost sexy as his easy charm takes effect. When he delivers the news of a prior engagement — in the marital sense — it is a moment of heart-rending sadness.

In truth, this is not a brilliant production, but Tennessee Williams's brilliant words are given a great deal of life, which is always something worth doing.

Editing meets challenge of quiz student's sudden illness

STALIN would have been proud. In University Challenge last night a contestant was "airbrushed" into the final spots, writes Kamal Ahmed.

Oxford Brookes University were well behind the London School of Economics, when — three minutes before the end of the recording — Jacqui Hill, of the Brookes team had to be helped out of the studio suffering from high blood

pressure. So presenter Jeremy Paxman and producer Peter Gwynn asked technicians to undertake some "picture massaging" to keep Jacqui in her place for the programme's close. A picture of her taken from the beginning of the programme, without the traditional goodbye wave, had been inserted. Jacqui has now made a full recovery.

Diana fund law firm told to compete for business

Rival tenders to be invited after controversy over £500,000 bill

Rory Carroll

THE Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, announced yesterday that its lawyers, Mishcon de Reya, would have to compete for business — days after the firm was fiercely criticised for charging £500,000.

Rival solicitors can now bid for the high-profile job of helping manage the fund, which involves thousands of complicated and expensive financial deals.

The fund's board unanimously expressed confidence in Mishcon de Reya and there was no connection between yesterday's announcement and last week's £500,000 bill.

Vanessa Corringham, spokeswoman for the fund, said the announcement clarified but did not change the existing situation.

"We believe Mishcon de Reya has acted properly but there was a need for that to be seen. They've worked the clock and helped us enormously and this is just clarifying that this is not a case of jobs for the boys."

Mr Julius had been criticised for his dual position as interim chairman of the fund.

Jonathan Cameron, spokesman for Mishcon de Reya, said his firm had sought to avert bad publicity by pressing the fund to open legal work to tender.

"We have always welcomed the opportunity for other firms to bid for work. It's beneficial for us to be seen to be in competition."

Mr Cameron said the fund had always been free to dump his firm at a moment's notice.

Mishcon de Reya will be retained until the fund's board decides otherwise. No date was given for when such a decision might be made.

Ms Corringham said: "As we made have clear in the past, the speed with which the fund was set up meant that a number of measures taken were interim."

"These things are constantly being reviewed. But there are no plans for change at the moment."

"All services, be they public relations, marketing, graphic design or anything else, will be put out to tender. But that was always the intention."

"Mishcon de Reya are continuing with their work for the fund, and that is not changing at the moment."

Last week Mr Julius told the Mirror: "This is the first I have heard of any move to

dispense with Mishcon de Reya. The trustees haven't said anything to me about this."

Staff at Mishcon de Reya, which discounted usual fees by 20 per cent, are reportedly distressed that the £500,000 bill for 11 weeks' work was portrayed as grasping.

Most of the firm's bill was said to be for setting up commercial operations which would generate money for the fund.

Charles's magazine flops

Ruaradh Nicoll

PERSPECTIVES, the magazine Prince Charles set up in 1994 to combat modern architecture, looks set to close after hemorrhaging nearly £1.5 million.

Philip Harris, a consultant brought in to try to save the ailing journal, has recommended that the magazine either shut down at a cost of £165,000 or change completely.

"Perspectives is not a market-led publication," Mr Harris wrote. "It is a magazine trying to find a market."

The prince, who is certain to be embarrassed by the situation, has just been asked by the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, to help select an architect to design the £50 million Scottish parliament.

Last year, Perspectives cost the prince's Institute of Architecture — which is in no great shape itself — close to £188,000.

"The gloomy prognosis in business terms is that the losses will plateau at about the annual £200,000 level for the foreseeable future," wrote Mr Harris.

The prince set up the institute and the magazine to promote his view of architecture, best typified by his description of the proposed extension to the National Gallery as a "monstrous



Perspectives: 'a magazine trying to find a market'

carbuncle". He wrote an article in the first edition under the line, "The Prince of Wales: Speaking up for modern architecture".

Mr Harris, a former publishing director at IPC and Reed International, said sales had slumped so badly that the magazine was selling advertising space at a discount of 65 per cent.

"The revenue that Perspectives is taking on average would only really justify about 6-8 pages," he wrote. Perspectives is a 100-page glossy magazine.

Readers have become ever more scarce. In April 1994, the first issue sold 19,310 copies in the shops. By April 1997 only 2,109 were taken off the shelves.

The rest were bought by subscribers.

In meetings with a wide variety of professionals, the consultant said he took a poll of comments on the magazine. "I am not aware of any great waves created by this magazine," said one respondent. "It is viewed with a certain amount of cynicism in the profession."

"It is a grotesque denial of what it is about," said a third.

The only hope for Perspectives' future, according to Mr Harris, is for it to become an occasional, issue-based journal which centres on important subjects.

For a subject like city centres, the institute, which it would be merged with, would import experts to thrash out the issue and then send out 10,000 magazines to a well-honed mailing list of opinion formers.

As it would be free, the project would need a sponsor.

Last night, after a meeting of the board, a spokesman for the magazine denied it was about to close.

"The Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture, which is looking to establish a new agenda for itself, is making a rigorous examination of every part of its organisation, including Perspectives. The report was part of this rigorous testing," he said.

Drift in a modern age, 62 cover story

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Algeria

Pentagon embarrassed by revelations over Vietnam pilot killed in action



President Clinton prays at the Tomb of the Unknowns. But one of bodies may have been identified — PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY CAMERON

Unknown soldier rises to haunt US military cover-up

Martin Kettle
in Washington

THE inscription on the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery reads "Here rests in honoured glory an American soldier known but to God". But now it seems that, in addition to the Almighty, several top Pentagon officials may also have been well aware of the probable identity of the supposedly unknown Vietnam warrior who was buried there with full military honours in 1984.

Yesterday, after a secret seven-month investigation, the CBS television channel revealed that the body — placed in the sacred tomb in a ceremony addressed by the then president, Ronald Reagan — was that of Air Force Lieutenant Michael Blassie, who was shot down in Vietnam in May 1972.

A Pentagon spokesman yesterday announced an in-

quiry into the allegations and that the defence secretary, William Cohen, would decide what to do when the inquiry was complete.

The spokesman said there were "many, many unknowns in this matter" but added that the Pentagon had not ruled out exhumation and possible DNA testing.

La Blassie's family, who live in Missouri, confirmed yesterday that they believe the allegations and want him reburied under his own tombstone, either in his home state or at Arlington.

La Blassie's mother, Jean, told the AP news agency: "I would like him brought home."

Mary Blassie, one of his three sisters, told the Guardian that the revelation would put an end to years of distress for the family.

"We're very happy about it. We've never had any closure. We've always had to wonder what happened to the remains," she said from her home.

The Tomb of the Unknowns is one of the most sacred sites in the National Cemetery. It contains the remains of four unidentified bodies, one each from the first and second world wars, one from the Korean war, and one from the Vietnam war.

The Vietnam unknown was interred 14 years ago. President Reagan eulogised: "As a child, did he play on some street in a great American city? Did he work beside his father on a farm in America's heartland? Did he marry? Did he have children?"

According to CBS, the answers to these questions are: yes, no, no and no. Lt Blassie came from St Louis and never married or had children.

One of the great difficulties facing the military authorities is that modern body identification techniques are so good.

CBS reported that the skeletal remains of an American soldier were found in South Vietnam in October 1972 —

five months after Lt Blassie was shot down — along with an identity card, money and shreds of a flight suit.

The identity tag belonged to Lt Blassie, and the remains were therefore designated "believed to be" Michael Blassie. But the identity card and money disappeared later and in 1980, at a time when pressure was mounting for an unknown Vietnam serviceman to be interred at Arlington, the remains were reclassified as unknown.

The Blassie family was informed in 1972 that their son had been shot down and was missing, presumed dead. It was not until 1982 that they were informed that an identity card bearing Michael Blassie's name had been recovered.

The Pentagon admits that it has destroyed many of the relevant records in the case precisely to ensure that the mystery of the Unknown could be preserved in a dignified manner. The spokesman said: "It is a long held tradition."

The short life and violent death of an all-American war hero



Michael Blassie, during training in 1971

THE life and death of Michael Blassie was a textbook example of America's Vietnam tragedy, writes Martin Kettle.

The young air force lieutenant from St Louis, Missouri, was 23 years old when he was sent to Vietnam in 1972, never to return.

Five months later, after flying 132 missions against Vietcong and North Vietnamese targets — an average of almost a mission a day — his A-37 fighter plane was shot down over An Loc, north of Saigon, on

May 11 1972, during one of the decisive battles of the war. He was 24 and unmarried when he died.

Blassie was born in April 1948 and grew up in north St Louis, where he attended the local Roman Catholic high school. He was the oldest of five children. His

father George, who died in 1991, was a meat-cutter and served in the army during the second world war. His mother Jean still lives in the St Louis suburb of Florissant.

His sister Mary yesterday described her brother as a handsome young man, six

feet tall with brown eyes and brown hair. He did well at school and college and was a noted soccer player who represented the air force at the sport.

"He was a very motivated person, who was a really excellent example for the rest of us to follow," Mary said yesterday.

He graduated from high school in the summer of 1966 and became a trainee at the United States Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs.

In 1970, he was posted for flight training at Columbus air force base in Mississippi, before being posted to Vietnam a year and a half later.

Like all US service personnel who died or were reported missing during the Vietnam war, the name of Michael Joseph Blassie is recorded on the Vietnam veterans memorial wall in Washington.

Drugs firms plan biggest merger

British-based group in talks with US rival on £77bn deal

Julia Finch and Pauline Springett

BRITISH-based drugs group SmithKline Beecham yesterday unveiled plans for the world's biggest corporate merger.

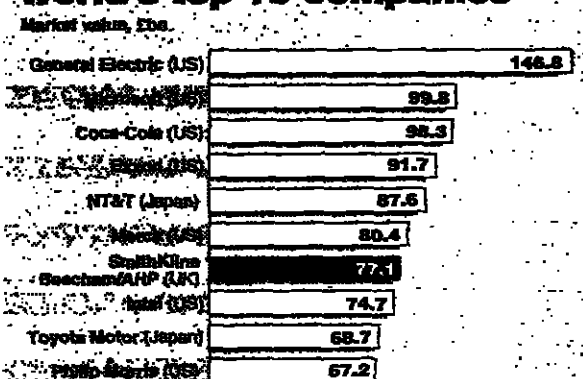
The £77 billion deal with US rival American Home Products would create the world's seventh biggest company, ahead of giant corporations like the Japanese Toyota motor company and IBM.

It would mean that nine out of the world's top 25 companies were healthcare companies. The merger would also create the world's biggest prescription drugs company.

SmithKline's top sellers are the antibiotic Augmentin, which had sales of £1.4 billion last year, and Serenol, a new generation anti-depressant which also had sales of more than £1 billion. Its consumer brands include Lucozade, Ribena, Panadol and Andrews Liver Salts.

American Home Products' biggest seller is the osteoporosis and hormone replacement therapy drug Premarin, which is the most heavily prescribed drug in the US. Its over-the-counter range includes haemorrhoids treatment Preparation H and the painkiller Advil, which has recently been launched in the UK.

World's top 10 companies



Top consumer brands

Banquet, Camo, Aquafresh, Macelean

Paralim, Hecol, Panadol, Ribena, Serenol, Lucozade

Coughlool, Serenol, Beecham, Cortac, Night Nurse

Anti-smoking, Nicorette gum, Nicorette patches

Indigestion, Advil, Serenol, Serenol, Serenol

End, Gaviscon, Milk of Magnesia, Tums

Rebena, Hecol, Lucozade, Ribena

als and hormone replacement therapy drug Premarin, which is the most heavily prescribed drug in the US. Its over-the-counter range includes haemorrhoids treatment Preparation H and the painkiller Advil, which has recently been launched in the UK.

The companies would have joint annual sales of nearly £27 billion.

SmithKline was forced to reveal that it was in talks with AHP because its share price has soared over the past week. But the company stressed that no deal has so far been reached.

If the takeover goes ahead, it will dwarf all previous mergers, including the current £20 billion bid for American phone company MCI by WorldCom, another US telecoms giant.

To date, the largest UK company merger is the £24 billion link-up between drinks companies Guinness and Grandmet, now renamed Diageo.

Last night SmithKline revealed to comment on possible job losses if the deal goes ahead. SmithKline employs 53,000 staff worldwide, including 6,000 in the UK, mainly in London. American Home Products has 60,000 staff.

The last time two big drugs companies combined — when Glaxo merged with Wellcome in 1995 — there were about 7,000 job losses.

A link between SmithKline and AHP would be the latest in a series of mergers designed to cut costs and boost earnings in the drugs industry.

It takes an average of 13 years to bring a new prescription drug to the market and £100 million in research and development costs.

SmithKline Beecham itself was the product of a merger in 1989 when US group SmithKline Beckman and the UK's Beecham Group joined forces.

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German neo-Nazi tide creates no-go zones for foreigners

continued from page 1

youth to death last year in Magdeburg, the capital of neighbouring Saxony-Anhalt, the murder was not categorised as an extreme-right crime.

Xenophobia is not being driven by an influx of foreigners, although local authorities are effectively encouraging

anti-immigrant sentiment by constantly warning about the threat of illegal immigration.

Almost 9 per cent (7 million) of Germany's population is foreign, but the figure in the east, outside Berlin, is only about 1.5 per cent.

The judicial authorities in the east, however, are prosecuting dozens of taxi drivers

found to have carried foreigners who have entered the country illegally across the Polish or Czech borders.

According to the experts, the pervasive racist climate is neither political nor politicised, but rather unfocused.

"If all these people are prone to the far right, that doesn't mean they're real neo-

Nazis or violent. Rather they're anti-foreigner, anti-Semitic, believe in German historical romanticism and social Darwinism," said Mr Wagner. "It's a diffuse sub-culture that is forming into a counter-culture and could spawn a political party of protest the way the Greens did in the '80s."

A mere 70 years later, the Telegraph has at last recanted. "A controversial document leaked by British intelligence to prevent Labour winning the 1924 general election was a forgery commissioned by MI6, according to KGB files." Spooks and the press in Wheen's world

G2 page 5

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4 BRITAIN

The Whitehouse Lane murders

Hitmen in drugs sting jailed for life



Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

TWO men were yesterday jailed for life at the Old Bailey for a triple killing in an Essex drugs feud. The double-crossing involved signalling a new ruthlessness in the increasingly competitive drugs business.

Michael Steele, 55, from Clacton, Essex, and Jack Whomes, 36, from Brookford, Suffolk, shook their heads as the jury returned a unanimous verdict after deliberating for 4½ days after a four-month trial estimated to have cost more than £2 million.

Indicating that the pair should serve a minimum of 15 years, the judge, Mr Justice Hadden, told them: "You are responsible for taking the lives of your victims in a violent and summary way. They had crossed your path and you showed them no mercy."

It was December 1995, and the three men in a grey Range Rover parked on a crisp morning in Workhouse Lane, looking like they were asleep. Peter Theobald, the owner of nearby Whitehouse Farm, and farmworker Ken Jiggins came across them on their way to feed their pheasants. One of the men had a mobile phone in his hand, another was resting his arm on the steering wheel. Mr Jiggins, expecting poachers, knocked gingerly on the window — but soon realised no one in the blood-spattered vehicle was going to be waking up.

Craig Rolfe had been shot twice in the head. Tony Tucker had been shot three times and Patrick Tate, in the rear of the car, had also been shot three times — the final

time in the back of his head. Steele and Whomes, who had shot them, had already fled, joking about one of their guns that had let them down but remarking "that's the fuckers sorted out".

The trio whose bodies were found in the lane nine miles from Chelmsford, Essex, at 8am on December 7, 1995, were the victims of a classic gangland sting: they had been lured there by Steele on the promise of a chance to rip off someone else, little imagining they had been suckered.

All five men were involved in drug dealing, and the three victims in "security" — the euphemism for protection rackets in Essex and London's clubland. They had had a row over a recent cannabis deal because the drug, imported by Steele from Holland, was of such poor quality it had to be dumped and the buyers reimbursed. Tate and Steele had fallen out over the deal, with Steele believing Tate had sold on some of the cannabis while still demanding £45,000 reimbursement.

Tate meanwhile felt he had not been paid enough, and had threatened to make Steele beg for forgiveness "on his knees" and then kill him. Tate was invited by Steele to Holland to pick up his money, but the feud festered.

Despite this, Tate and his team could not resist the temptation to rip off and, if necessary, kill a cocaine courier supposedly due to arrive in that desecrated Essex field. The hook was baited and the big fish of the Essex underworld swallowed it whole. The argument between Tate and Steele was over. No one, supposedly, would talk.

As Steele and Whomes joked their way along the get-



A police reconstruction of the triple murder in a car parked in an Essex lane for which Jack Whomes (left) and Michael Steele (centre) were jailed for life

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

away route, pleased that the killings had been so simple, they did not realise they had made one big mistake: the choice of their getaway driver — a plump young man called Darren Nicholls, who liked to rub shoulders with major underworld "faces".

Nicholls, from Braintree in Essex, had trained with BT and was used by criminals to fix their own burglar alarms, earning himself the nickname of Spark. He had drifted into crime and was jailed for three years for counterfeiting. Inside, he met Steele and Tate. He was impressed by Steele, whom he thought extremely clever, and was flattered to be included in his set. After his release, he did odd jobs for him and his mother, then became his gofer-cum-driver.

On the night of the murders, Nicholls later told

police, he thought he was picking up Steele and Whomes from a drugs deal or a meeting to prepare one. But he noticed something strange about their manner, and that both were wearing overalls and there were red specks on the surgical gloves. Whomes was wearing. The two men started dismantling their guns in the car.

Steele remarked: "They won't fuck with us again." Nicholls replied: "I hope I never fall out with you." Steele said Whomes was a "cold-hearted bastard" who had shot all three men — and later told Nicholls he felt like the "Angel of Death", and that he had done everyone a favour by the killings.

But the Essex police investigation, which Steele and Whomes had calculated would hit a gangland cul-

de sac with no one talking, got extra impetus when it emerged there was a connection with Leah Betts, who collapsed and died on her 18th birthday after taking ecstasy bought at Raquel's, a Basildon nightclub, where Tucker ran the security. That sparked rumours that the deaths were linked to hers, and put additional pressure on police for arrests.

They received little co-operation from those who knew the victims and their break came only when Nicholls finally agreed to talk after two "no comment" interviews. In exchange, he and his family were given new identities. The media are forbidden from publishing a picture of him.

It was on Nicholls's evidence, over more than two weeks at the Old Bailey, that

the prosecution case rested. Glancing occasionally at his ex-colleagues, he stuck by his tale. Steele and Whomes, suggesting that Nicholls was only implicating them to protect himself, put forward alibis but they were not accepted. There was other evidence against the men, linking their phone calls to the area at the time, but it was circumstantial.

The case rested on whether or not the jury believed Nicholls or the accused. Yesterday they decided, and also convicted the men of conspiring with a third man, Peter Corry, to import cannabis.

More than two years after the killings, tied on a rusty iron gate on Workhouse Lane, are four bunches of dead flowers. A small card reads: "Dear Craig. Always in my thoughts. From Rita XX"

Deadly trio

CRAIG ROLFE was a violent man with a cocaine habit, happy to deal out beatings to people who crossed him and over drug deals.

PATRICK TATE was a tattooed, 18-stone man with a serious record. He carried out a robbery on a Happy Kater in Laidon, Essex, and stole £800. When arrested he was found to have cocaine and was charged with possession. But when he appeared at Billericay magistrates court in December 1988, he leapt from the dock and fled on a waiting motorbike. He escaped to Spain and remained at large for a year before crossing into Gibraltar,

where he was arrested and sent back to England. He had links with Kenneth Noye, currently Britain's "most wanted" criminal from their time in Swaleside prison.

TONY TUCKER, a friend of Tate's since childhood, was a former soldier, and an organiser of security for clubs, where he charged drug dealers for access. He was also a former minder for boxer Nigel Benn. He owned a £250,000 bungalow at Fobbing, near Basildon, and a number of exotic cars. He had been implicated, as had Rolfe, in the killing of local criminal Kevin Whitaker over a drug deal.

High risk move to advance peace talks

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

THE Government will embark on a high risk strategy next week in an effort to boost the flagging peace process, overshadowed by eight sectarian murders within six weeks.

Along with the Irish government, it will unveil a consultative document on the crucial cross-border institu-

tions envisaged in a political settlement in Northern Ireland. The move is more likely to open divisions than prompt agreement, but ministers realise they have to tackle the issue head on.

The multi-party talks move to London for three days next week, where the participating parties will focus on links between Northern Ireland and the republic.

The parties yesterday asked the British and Irish govern-

ments to come up with the document on cross-border bodies. The mastery in the overall blueprint released last week was its ambiguity, allowing both Unionists and the SDLP to interpret it as best suited to them.

But that will be more difficult when dealing solely with one of the three strands of negotiations. One solution could be to draw up a range of options, and let the parties argue around these.

Paul Murphy, Northern Ireland minister for political development, said next week was the beginning of "hot-gritty" negotiations. Negotiations go to Dublin next month.

The mood at Stormont yesterday was sombre, amid fears that the mainstream loyalist paramilitaries, the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Freedom Fighters, had been enticed back to murder. Detectives believe the UFF was responsible for the murder on Monday of taxi driver Larry Brennan, aged 51.

He was shot in the Ormeau Road, south Belfast, an area where the UDA/UFF is strong. The Loyalist Volunteer Force, which claimed the previous four murders of Catholics, has no presence in the area. No group admitted responsibility.

Mr Brennan's murder came

eight hours after the Irish National Liberation Army, like the LVF opposed to the ceasefire and the peace process, killed UDA commander Jim Guiney, 38 in Dummurry, south Belfast. It was seen as an attempt to drag the UDA/UFF back to war.

If UDA involvement could be proved, it would lead to its political representatives, the Ulster Democratic Party, being kicked out of the multi-party talks. Without the UDP, it becomes impossible for David Trimble, Ulster Unionist leader, to deliver agreement under the sufficient consensus rules.

Mr Brennan, the fourth vic-

tim of the troubles in 1998, was divorced with two children. He was engaged to be married to Dorothy Crenney, a Protestant. His two closest friends were also Protestants. He lived with his mother, Mary, 71, in the nationalist Markets area of Belfast, but had no terrorist connections.

He had worked for Enterprise Taxi for 25 years. It operates in a mixed area, but would be seen to be a Catholic firm. His sister, Eilish O'Reilly, begged that there be no retaliation.

It was the second tragedy to hit the family in the troubles. Mrs Brennan had a son aged 21 who was shot in 1972.

Anti-corruption team investigates 'police robbery'

Duncan Campbell

SCOTLAND Yard's anti-corruption branch is investigating claims by a criminal that Flying Squad officers helped themselves to the proceeds of a £350,000 robbery he carried out.

The inquiry coincides with the formation of a team within the anti-corruption branch aimed at rooting out up to 250 dishonest officers within the Metropolitan police.

involved in the robbery and that the officers had then taken the proceeds. The other account suggests that the robber was stopped after the robbery and officers took the stolen money.

Extra officers have been drafted in and the formation of a 45-person squad called CIDB will carry out investigations, targeting suspect officers in the same way as career criminals are investigated, using 24-hour surveillance, bugging devices and hidden videos.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said yesterday: "Approximately 18 months ago, CID received an allegation of theft of the proceeds of a robbery by officers. The matter was thoroughly investigated and there is insufficient evidence at this time to proceed with disciplinary or criminal action."

But it is understood that following action by the anti-corruption branch last month, the investigation has been reignited. A Flying Squad officer and two former members of the unit were arrested last month and charged with conspiracy to supply cannabis worth £500,000. The arrests coincided with a raid on Flying Squad premises.

The original allegation about the robbery was made by a professional criminal who approached the anti-corruption branch. He is understood to have claimed to be frightened of what might happen to him and to have sought protection.

There are differing accounts of the events preceding the alleged theft by officers. One account suggests that officers arranged for the criminal to be released from prison so that he could carry out the security van robbery.

It is also suggested that a security guard had been in-

Most of the new officers, who have not all yet taken up their posts, are skilled detectives. Scotland Yard hopes the combination of new officers and new techniques will act as a deterrent to officers who might be tempted by the large amounts of money available and as a way of nailing existing corrupt officers.

Last week, the Commons home affairs select committee opened its report on police discipline and complaints with the following quotation from the commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Sir Paul Condon: "I honestly believe I conduct the most honourable large city police service in the world. I believe that the overwhelming majority of the 27,000 men and women in the Met are honest; they are decent, they are brave... However, I do have a minority of officers who are corrupt, dishonest, unethical... They commit crimes, they neutralise evidence in important cases and they betray police operations and techniques to criminals."

He has been criticised by some Metropolitan police officers for lowering morale by referring to the corruption so openly. He has said that he would like to use the final years of his commissionership to rid the service of as much corruption as possible.

Bombs confession by Welsh nationalist shocks supporters

Owen Bowcott

A CONVICTED Welsh nationalist, who repeatedly denied sending letter bombs to Conservative politicians, has shocked supporters campaigning for his acquittal by belatedly admitting that he was guilty.

Sion Aubrey Roberts was given a 12 year sentence in 1993, after he had spent several months in custody on remand. He was released from prison last month after serving half his sentence.

Roberts's trial had followed an MI5 surveillance operation involving 38 officers. He was the first person to be convicted for involvement in the first bombing campaign by the militant Welsh-separatist organisation Meibion Glyndwr (Sons of Glendower). Between 1979 and 1994 around 300 English-owned cottages were damaged by arson attacks.

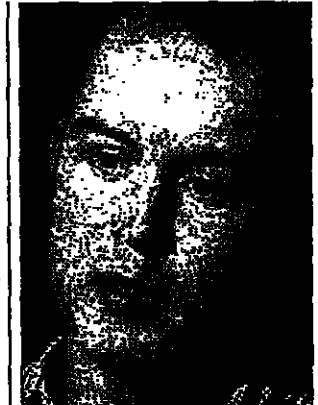
Several Welsh groups — including Baptists and Methodist Y Wawr, the principality's equivalent of the Women's In-

stitute — had called for his conviction to be overturned. But in an interview on the Welsh language television channel, S4C, Roberts confirmed he had sent letter bombs to two Tory politicians — including Lord Wyn Roberts of Conway, a former Welsh Office minister.

"Before I joined Meibion Glyndwr I considered what I was getting into and I knew that if I was caught I'd get 20 years in jail," he told the Y Byd ar Bedwar programme.

"I believed that I was a soldier and I followed orders. I would have done whatever was necessary at the time."

He admitted members of the Welsh terror group rented isolated holiday homes to set up bomb factories and discuss tactics. "For every one activist there were 10 behind them. There was one circle of people who planned devices, another circle who did the surveillance work and another who supplied the materials. But I did not know who my contact was except to look at."



Sion Roberts, admitted his guilt on Welsh television

Roberts, aged 26, of Llangefeli, Anglesey, maintains he was released from prison because Wales had voted for devolution and the political climate had changed. He now renounces violence. "If the campaign started tomorrow I would not take part. I would not encourage anyone to take

part because whatever the future is for Wales, it will have to be reached by democratic means."

The Prison Service yesterday said Roberts had been entitled to 50 per cent remission for good behaviour.

Michael Fisher, the London-based solicitor who represented Mr Roberts at the Caernarfon crown court trial, said he had not spoken to his former client for many years.

At the time, the civil rights organisation Liberty criticised the use of MI5 in a criminal case on the grounds that the intelligence services were not trained to present evidence in court.

"Many people think I am innocent but it is important they realise I was a member of Meibion Glyndwr and I did take action," Roberts said.

Ray Davies, a Caerphilly councillor who campaigned for Roberts's release, said: "I am bitterly disappointed he's saying this. I'm not 100 per cent convinced. Sion is a nice boy — there's no way he's a terrorist."

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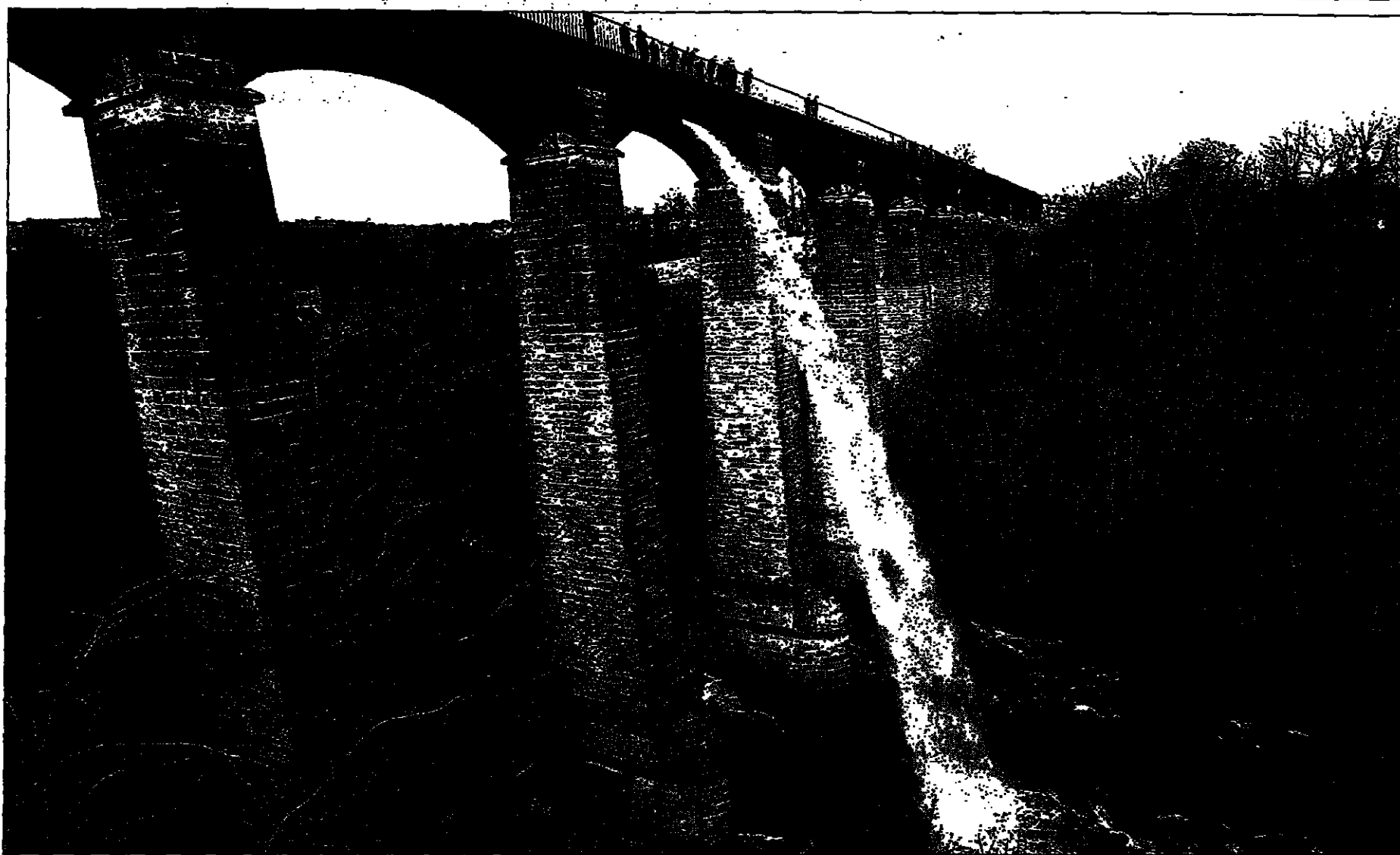
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I for life



Water falls 120 feet into the River Dee from the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct after a team from British Waterways removed the plug at the start of a restoration programme. The Grade I listed aqueduct, the biggest and highest in Britain, was built by Thomas Telford as part of a plan to link Liverpool to Bristol via the Dee, Mersey and Severn. PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCPHIE

Anger over ban by doctors

Family told by practice that their first call-out in 25 years was a 'gross abuse of the system'

Stuart Miller

A CHESHIRE GP's practice yesterday came under fire for striking off a family who called out an emergency doctor for their sick daughter — their first call-out in 25 years. Michael and Janice O'Grady were told by Stephen Maxwell, a partner at the Kenmore medical centre in Wilmslow, that they had wasted resources and abused the system by calling out an emergency doctor when they feared that their eight-year-old daughter, Sara, had contracted meningitis. The family has now had to register with another doctor.

They have lodged a complaint with the local health authority, and next week will embark on the formal procedure aimed at resolving the dispute. Mr O'Grady, a 50-year-old retired headmaster, said yesterday: "We find it totally abhorrent that our first emergency call, when our daughter was extremely distressed, results in us being removed from the list." He said his wife, a medical secretary, had obtained a price list for emergency locum services that suggested the call-out may have cost the practice as little as £12. "I have offered to pay that. At the time, I would have paid £100 to get a doctor to see Sara."



Sara O'Grady with her parents Janice and Michael... the family has been struck off by their medical practice

The practice's decision was also voiced concern. "I haven't heard the doctor's side," he said. "But if it is as Mr O'Grady says, then it does seem an extraordinary case." Martin Bell, the local MP,

Media inquiries to the practice were yesterday being referred to the Medical Defence Union. A spokeswoman said Dr Maxwell was not prepared to comment because doing so would breach patient confidentiality. The dispute began on December 8 when Sara was sent home from school complaining of nausea and a headache. During the afternoon, she also developed a temperature so her parents called the practice and were told to take Sara to the emergency surgery. When they arrived to be told that they faced a 90-minute wait, they informed the receptionist that they would return in an hour. But as soon as they got home, Sara vomited, then fell asleep. Her parents decided to leave her in the hope that she would sleep off whatever she had been suffering from. But when she awoke a few hours later, her condition

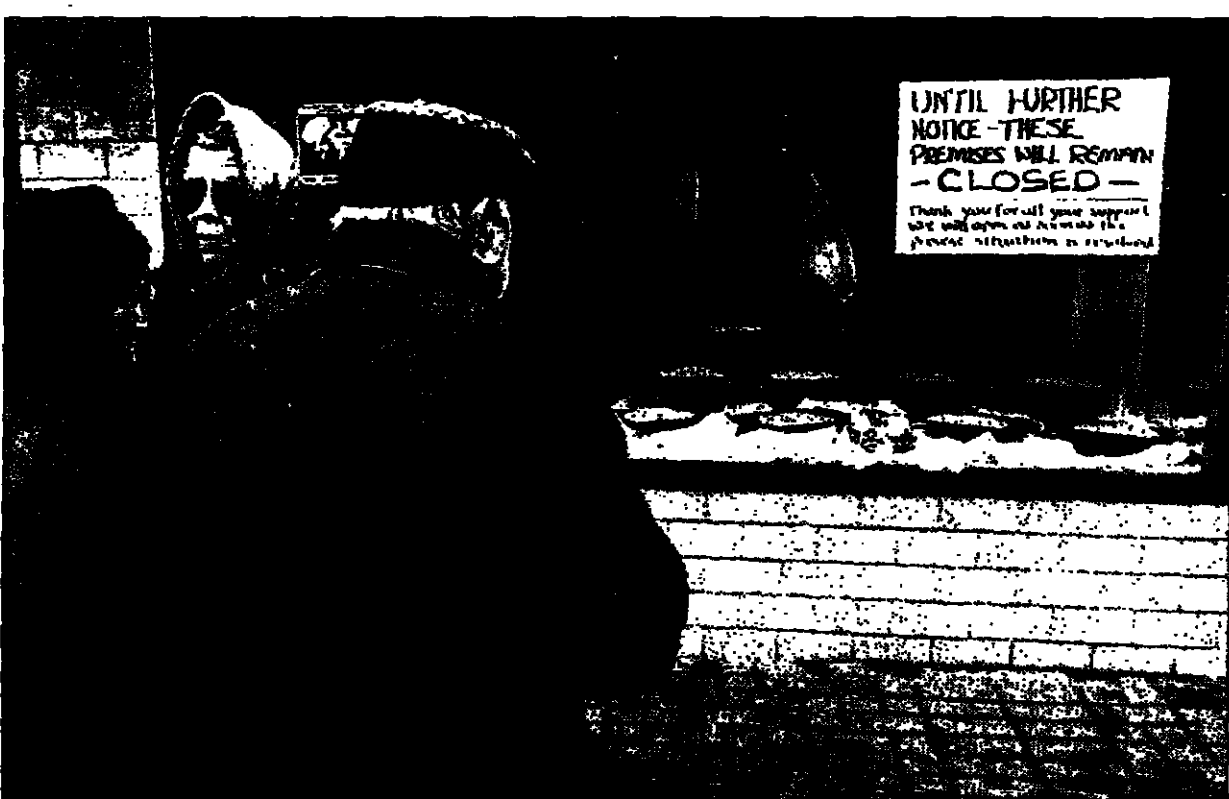
appeared to have deteriorated. "She was screaming for something to take away the pain in her head," said Mr O'Grady. "We just panicked and called the doctor." An emergency locum attended and prescribed antibiotics for an infection — but only after Mr O'Grady received a phone call from Dr Maxwell, in which he claims, the GP accused him of "not being bothered" to wait at the practice. On Christmas Eve, the family received a letter from Dr Maxwell, informing them that the call-out had been an "expensive waste of resources" and a "gross abuse of the system" and that they had been removed from the list. Although the individual GP with whom they were registered, David Stuckley, has accepted Mr and Mrs O'Grady's version of events, the practice has refused to reconsider. "All I want is an apology," Mr O'Grady said yesterday.

Bomb suspect was 'bugged'

Emily Sheffield

A MEMBER of an IRA gang that launched three mortar bomb salvos at Heathrow airport was under surveillance by the security services for 2 1/2 years, a court in London was told yesterday. On one day alone Michael Gallagher, aged 55, was tailed by 20 operatives as he travelled across London for a what appeared to be a rendezvous with an IRA member. His home was also bugged. The three attacks on separate days, in which Semtex-packed missiles were fired towards passenger planes, were intended to cause enormous damage and disruption at Heathrow in March 1994, but "mercifully" the devices failed to explode and no one was injured. Richard Horwell, prosecuting, told Woolwich crown court. "That they were intended to explode is beyond doubt. They were packed with high performance plastic explosive and the contained detonators. It is plain... that at the very least widespread destruction to property was intended." In one attack a bomb landed only a few feet from six terrified aircraft cleaners, he said. To say it was lucky the electronic device did not explode was "surely to underestimate their fortune that night". Michael Gallagher, aged 55, is accused of conspiring to cause explosions between January and March 1994 and "making a contribution towards acts of terrorism" between February and May the same year. He is also accused of providing vital support to the bombers, who are still at large, making available a garage in the knowledge that it would be used in connection with terrorist acts. He denies the charges. Gallagher, of Earls Court, west London, hired a garage later used by the IRA to store

and assemble the bombs, according to the prosecution. He also had dealings involving a red Ford Sierra car believed to have been used in the operation. "The functions that such people perform may be relatively mundane, but their contribution is a vital one and should not be underestimated," Mr Horwell said. The bombers "trained and valued" by the IRA would have been on the mainland for only a short time and would have needed someone to hire vehicles and premises. Gallagher allegedly supplied such support. The first attack, at 5.55pm on March 9, was, like the others, preceded by coded telephone warnings to news agencies, Mr Horwell said. The initial salvo of mortars had been electronically fired from tubes fitted into a red Nissan Micra parked at the Excelair Hotel, just outside the airport perimeter. As they blasted off they set the vehicle alight, and flames quickly spread to cars parked nearby. He said the three missiles landed on or near the northern runway. A further four bombs were fired the next day just before midnight, this time landing on the south runway. A police search quickly discovered that the second salvo had been fired from a "launch unit" hidden in woodland several hundred metres away. The third launch site was in scrubland just inside the perimeter fence, south of Terminal Four. Five missiles were fired. One struck the terminal roof. Police were led to Gallagher by a member of the public who had become suspicious of a man with an Irish accent. Mr Horwell said much of the prosecution's case would be concerned with tape recordings. A wealth of circumstantial evidence provided a picture of Gallagher as a "knowing and significant contributor" to the attacks. The case continues today.



Butcher John Barr and Sons, which yesterday admitted selling food contaminated with E. coli. PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD

Families of sick angry as E. coli butcher's shop is fined £2,250

Lawrence Donegan

VICTIMS of the world's worst E. coli food poisoning outbreak reacted furiously last night after the Scottish butcher's shop which sold contaminated meat was fined just £2,250. John Barr and Sons, a former Scotland butcher of the year, admitted two charges in connection with the outbreak in central Scotland in November 1996, which killed 20 people and left more than 400 ill. Charges against the firm's partners, including John Barr, his wife Elaine, and son Martin, were dropped after a deal was struck between the defence and prosecution on the eve of a trial at Hamilton sheriff court which had been expected to last a month.

Sheriff Lewis Cameron said the food poisoning outbreak had brought "notoriety and financial loss" on the Wishaw-based butcher's, which had lost 40 per cent of its business since the outbreak. "However, the court has a duty to mark its displeasure at the lapses which form this complaint to which the firm has now pleaded guilty," he said, imposing the £2,250 fine. Paul Santoni, solicitor for many of the E. coli victims, said last night he was "surprised" at the size of the fine, while Ian McFarlane, whose partner Mary Cairns spent 18 days in hospital with E. coli poisoning, described the sheriff's remarks as "appalling". He said: "How can anyone talk about a business's financial loss when 20 lives were lost and hundreds of people

were made ill? My partner Mary is still suffering from the after-effects of the E. coli and, like the other families involved, we still don't know who is responsible." It emerged after yesterday's hearing that the defence had been seeking a plea bargain for months. Under the agreement, the butcher's firm admitted failing to ensure equipment was kept clean and failing to ensure that food was protected against contamination. The second charge alleged that in November 1996 the partnership sold food contaminated with E. coli and that "a number of persons" consumed the food, contracted food poisoning and died. In return, all charges against the Mr Barr and his family were dropped. Ian McCann, prosecuting,

told the court the first cases in the outbreak were detected at a hospital in Lanarkshire on November 27, 1996, and, at its peak, 160 people were admitted to hospitals across central Scotland. Mr Barr, aged 52, was cleared last October of "recklessness" supplying contaminated meat after a court ruled there was no corroborative evidence against him. George Moore, solicitor for Mr Barr, said after yesterday's hearing: "It is a very satisfactory outcome, particularly from the point of view of the Barr family. There are obviously a lot of lessons to be learned on the wider aspect." A government inquiry into the outbreak, headed by Hugh Pennington, called for stricter rules on handling of meat in butcher's shops and abattoirs.

News in brief

Weekend jail plan to cut inmate numbers

CHIEF probation officers yesterday urged the Home Secretary to consider introducing "weekend jails" as an alternative to the spiralling prison population. The number of inmates soared by 600 last week as the courts returned, taking the daily jail population to 62,970 — 3,000 over normal capacity. John Hicks, chairman of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, told the Commons home affairs select committee yesterday that serious consideration should be given to part-time prison to reduce the pressure on the prisons where numbers had reached a 40-year high at a time when recorded crime was falling. — Alan Travis

Detectives suspended

THREE more detectives have been suspended in Middlesbrough as part of a continuing investigation into allegations of corruption in the Cleveland force which claims it pioneered "zero tolerance" policing in Britain. A fourth has been moved to other duties. This takes the number of suspensions in the CID to seven officers with a further five being moved to other departments. Since a Police Complaints Authority-supervised investigation began in September last year. — Peter Hetherington

Editor quits complaints body

BRIDGET Rowe, the controversial editor of the Sunday Mirror, has quit the rule-making body of the Press Complaints Commission. In a letter to the PCC she said she could no longer fit in the meetings of the code committee. Sources denied Mrs Rowe's move had anything to do with criticism levelled at the Sunday Mirror following its revelations that Piers Merchant, the former Conservative MP, had had an affair with his former researcher, Anna Cox. — Kamal Ahmed

Union opposes schools plan

THE National Union of Teachers vowed yesterday to fight government plans to allow private businesses to take over management of state schools in deprived areas. Doug McAvoy, general secretary, labelled the proposals to set up education action zones, which would pave the way for private companies to run schools, as "more right-wing than anything proposed in 18 years of Tory government". Under the proposals, 25 education action zones are to be set up in deprived areas to try to raise education standards. — Virek Chaudhary

Allason's mother 'shocked'

NUJALA Allason, 77, mother of former Tory MP Rupert Allason, told a High Court libel jury yesterday how she was "shocked and horrified" at reading "dreadful language" about her son in a diary. He was described as a "convincing little shit". She started the 45-year-old author to the entry in a *Have I Got News For You* 1997 diary, Mr Allason of Belgrave, central London, is claiming damages over the "vicious and revolting slur". Mr Justice Popplewell has heard that it referred to Mr Allason's refusal to support the Government in a Commons no confidence vote on the Maastricht Treaty. Publishers EBC Worldwide Ltd and Hat Trick Productions deny libel. They claim the diary was light-hearted like the TV programme on which Mr Allason was once a guest panellist.

Ex-police chief over limit

A FORMER deputy chief constable of Merseyside police yesterday admitted driving while nearly four times over the drink-drive limit. David Rowe, 54, was arrested after crashing his car the day before Christmas Eve, magistrates at Kendal, Cumbria, were told. Howes was found to have 130 microgrammes of alcohol to 100 millilitres of breath. The legal limit is 35. The court heard that Howes had embarked on an alcohol rehabilitation programme. The hearing was adjourned for reports until February 10.

New inquest refused

THE High Court yesterday refused to allow a new inquest into the death of mother of two Sharon Tabern, 24, who died in her sleep four years ago after taking part in stage hypnosis in Leyland, Lancashire. Her mother, Margaret Harper, 52, launched a campaign to ban the entertainment. She got the Home Office to review the 1952 Hypnosis Act, and then received permission from the Attorney General to quash the inquest verdict of death by natural causes. But Lord Justice Simon Brown, sitting with Mr Justice Mance, rejected her application. The verdict did not rule out the possibility that hypnosis may have contributed to her death, the judge said. But the possibility was not substantial enough for the coroner to have reached an open verdict. — David Pallister

Space menu for the far-out diner

Tim Radford
Science Editor

AN AMERICAN culinary hit squad is working on the ultimate far-out diet book — 100 recipes for breakfast, lunch and supper on the Moon or Mars. The menu will be almost entirely vegetarian, and based on a choice of between 15 and 30 crops that can be grown in what space scientists called "a bioregenerative life support system".

This is Nasaspac for a sealed greenhouse in the vacuum of space or the hostile atmosphere of a distant planet, holding plants and algae which recycle urine and other waste back into water and comestibles. These "salad machines" will be urgently wanted on long-term space exploration voyages and lunar bases 15 or 20 years from now. "Because the cost of transporting food for these missions will be astronomical, only about 15 per cent of calories will be from earth-based foods," said David Levitsky, of Cornell University, who is working with a chef and a biological engineer on the project. "These imported foods will probably be the fats, flavour concentrates, and various meat and dairy-based foods, as well as a few luxuries such as chocolate," he said. Food is always a problem for space voyagers. The first Gemini and Apollo astronauts squeezed sticky gruel from tubes into their mouths, and then bit on bread, fruit and meat cubes coated with gela-

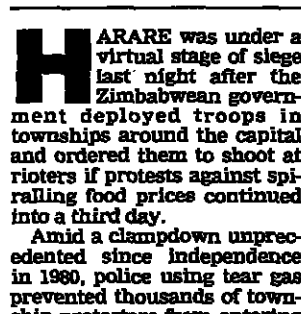
Future fare

Menu for the restaurant at the end of the solar system
HORS D'OEUVRES
The soy also rises: succulent tempah dip with solar-powered celery sticks
ENTREE
Marsian spring rolls: crispy bean sprouts wrapped in dehydrated rice pancakes, served on a bed of hydroponic lettuce.
DESSERT
Over the moon: tofu cheesecake sprinkled with potato-starch sweetener
tine to stop crumbs escaping. Shuttle crews nowadays go aloft for weeks with a choice of items like rehydratable macaroni and cheese casseroles, thermostabilised chicken à la king, and "intermediate moisture" fruits such as dried peaches. Cuisine in the shuttle did not begin to get even remotely haute until US astronauts were joined by foreign crews. Claude Nicollier of Switzerland took up a box of truffles, and the Japanese astronaut Mamoru Mori took red rice and seaweed soup. But explorers who fly to Mars or make even a temporary home on the Moon in the next century will have to depend on produce from the hydroponic allotment or controlled ecological life support system they take with them. "Food plays a critical role in the overall psychological well-being of isolated crews," says Fyot Levitsky, who is on a three-year NASA contract.

Soldiers told to fire at township 'trouble-makers'

Troops deployed to quell Harare riots

Alex Duvall Smith and Andrew Mubvumba in Harare



President Mugabe: Blames whites for economic woes

HARARE was under a virtual state of siege last night after the Zimbabwean government deployed troops in townships around the capital and ordered them to shoot at rioters if protests against spiralling food prices continued into a third day.

Amid a clampdown unprecedented since independence in 1980, police using tear gas prevented thousands of township protesters from entering Harare's business district.

The home affairs minister, Dumiso Dabengwa, said the troops were "armed with live ammunition and would not hesitate to shoot any people who are engaged in looting and trouble-making".

Last night armoured vehicles took up position in the huge Chitungwiza township 20 miles south of the capital and helicopters dropped tear gas on poor areas to the north and north-west. Protesters threw stones at passing cars, shops were looted and burnt and state radio reported that a toddler had been killed by rampaging crowds in Budiriro township.

At the city centre, where most shops and businesses closed yesterday fearing a repeat of Monday's looting, an eerie calm prevailed. Schools and factories around the city shut down because staff from the townships could not get to work.

The government responded to the riots by ordering private millers to scrap a 21 per cent rise in the price of the staple maize meal, which followed a 24 per cent increase on January 5. But the intervention came too late: all food prices have soared since mid-November when the Zimbabwean dollar collapsed as a result of economic mismanagement.

land will only go to their Zanu-PF cronies.

"Mugabe needs to be replaced but we also need the whites because they have the best land, they farm it well and their friends bring money into the country."

Bruce Mungamirwa, a flower seller, said: "This country is full of entrepreneurs and has lots of potential. They used to say we could be the Switzerland of Africa, and we could have if the government had not kept all the wealth."

Amid threats from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, Mr Mugabe is running out of populist measures to counter discontent.

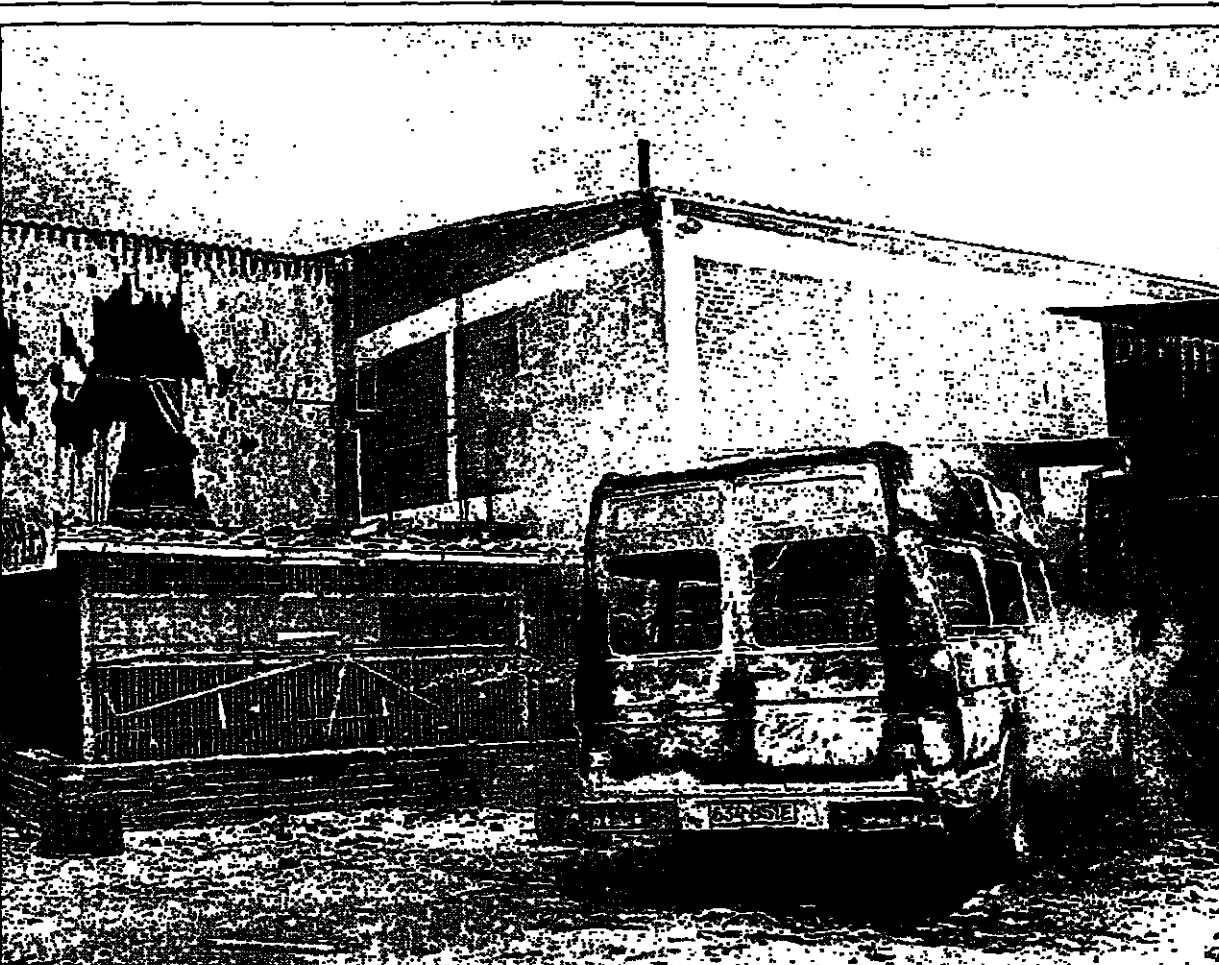
One such was the promise he made in October — which he dropped on Monday — to oust the last of the white farmers and resettle poor peasants on the land; another was a promise of payouts to war veterans.

Both those pledges cost money which, before the troubles, Mr Mugabe intended to find by raising taxes — thus putting further pressure on the double-digit inflation.

Observers believe President Mugabe and ministers from his party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF), have exacerbated the trouble by blaming the parlous economy on white "profiteers" such as the 4,000 farmers who own the best third of the land.

But in the townships, despite sporadic attacks on whites and others showing signs of wealth, few people appeared to believe the Zanu-PF line.

Tonderai Dzomkonja, aged 26, was selling bananas for Z\$1.50 (5p) each, a third more than last week. He said: "The government is not running the country properly. If they chase out the white farmers, as they say they want to, the



A shopping centre and a car burn in the Glen Norah suburb of Harare yesterday. Police used tear gas to keep township demonstrators out of the city centre on the second day of unrest provoked by steep price rises. PHOTOGRAPH: ALEXANDER JOE

Hutus vow to fight on

Matthew Bigg in Nairobi

BURUNDI'S main Hutu rebel group vowed yesterday to continue its guerrilla war against the military regime of Major Pierre Buyoya to force a negotiated settlement to the country's ethnic conflict.

At a news conference in Nairobi the local representative for the National Council for the Defence of Democracy, Innocent Nimpagaritse, said: "We have no other solution than to continue [military] pressure on the putschist army so we will bring back democracy in Burundi."

He denied that the council's armed wing, Forces for the Defence of Democracy, was targeting civilians.

The Tutsi-led army has provoked almost daily reports of killings of civilians blamed on Hutu rebels. — Reuters.

● Congo's president, Laurent Kabila, has called on the international community for aid to help him rebuild the country, which has foreign debt estimated at \$2.7 billion.

Clinton aims for genetic data law

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE White House published proposals yesterday to protect people liable to genetically influenced illness from discrimination by employers.

Its plans for a law to prevent companies demanding genetic information to show whether their workers are likely to develop ailments such as breast cancer and Huntington's chorea is intended to win public support for genetic research and testing.

The legislation is needed because of the development of tests which can identify a person's tendency to such inherited ailments.

The White House wants a bar on employers requiring or requesting a genetic test or genetic information as a condition of employment or of receiving company benefits, including health and insurance care.

The law should also prevent employers using genetic information to limit job opportunities.

In return, they should be able to use some genetic information in specific circumstances to preserve workplace health and safety.

But affected employees would have to give their consent and the results would have to be placed in confidential medical files kept separate from personnel files.

The White House stressed that much of the pressure for the new curbs had come from medical researchers, anxious that their breakthroughs are not used in controversial ways.

"In the next five to 10 years there will be tens of thousands of genetic disposition tests available," Francis Collins of the government-backed Human Genome Project said yesterday.

Mr Gore confirmed that the principles will cover workplace discrimination in health insurance policies, a development which is strongly opposed by insurers.

A health insurance spokeswoman, Patricia Powers, said yesterday that gene bias was "not a pressing problem".

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Indian farmers hand-spray chemicals on to their notoriously pest-prone cotton crops. PHOTOGRAPH: HARTMUT SCHWARZBACH

King Cotton reaps tragic harvest in Indian fields

Suzanne Goldenberg in the Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh state on the havoc caused by a short fat caterpillar

THE women of the village held their vigil by the corpse — pitiful thin bones wrapped in rough cotton and laid on a bed of straw — and watched the sun dying. The funeral would begin at dusk.

The man from the state agriculture department took the measure of the dead man's existence on a scrap of paper. Yelliah Golconda, of Kalligal village, a farmer in his mid-50s whose suicide left a son to be educated, a betrothed daughter to be married, debts of 45,000 rupees (\$700).

Golconda was the 26th cotton farmer to commit suicide in Warangal district in the past two months. In Andhra Pradesh state, the total is more than 50. Like most others, he died a slow, agonising death after swallowing pesticide.

But the real killer was cotton. Introduced 20 years ago to Warangal, the cash crop promised profits so glittering that farmers called it "white gold". More than 250,000 acres in Warangal are now under cotton, nearly a quarter of all the arable land. Though most holdings are just two or three acres, they represent the marginal farmers' hopes of breaking free of subsistence.

In the last four years cotton has lost its lustre. Unlike tobacco, or similar cash crops where cultivation of which is restricted, cotton has no government price support. In-

creased yields drove prices down and the crop was prone to pestilence and disease.

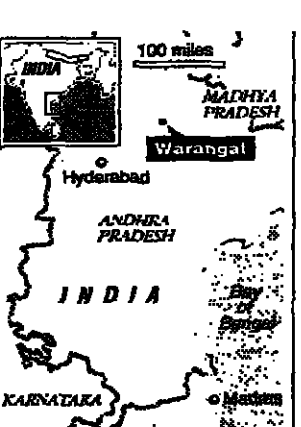
But the farmers were stubborn. They used fertilisers and pesticides in doses the manufacturers could never have imagined. Merchants gave them the poisons on credit and extracted interest rates of as high as 36 per cent.

Their way of life was already precarious when calamity struck in November: *Spodoptera litura*, a fat caterpillar about an inch long that attacks in darkness.

"It was as if the fields were being pruned by a gigantic pair of shears," said C. Cheru, a plant scientist at Warangal's agricultural research station. "I have never seen such devastation. They were crawling on the roads ... People scooped them up by handfuls from the fields. They were everywhere, they were an army."

Farmers were so terrified by the caterpillars that they sprayed their fields with toxic chemicals every other day. Instead of the two doses a season recommended by manufacturers, they also got their wives and children to roll pellets of the chemical Methemyl into jaggedy and rice bran to make them more enticing to the insects. The farmers, most illiterate, used no protective clothing or other safety measures.

L. Jalapaithi Rao, the research station's director, said over 300,000 litres of



'It was as if the fields were being pruned by a gigantic pair of shears'

Methemyl had been sold in the district since November. The average farmer had spent about 6,000 rupees an acre on it.

It did not work. The caterpillars became resistant and, when they had eaten the cotton, they attacked dhals (pulses) and other vegetables, leaving farmers with the prospect of no income at all.

In Kamaram village, the mother and young widow of Ravi Nellutla, aged 25, recounted his final days.

"This year the crop was a total zero," Ravi's mother, Mallamma Nellutla, said. "He would come home from the fields and couldn't stop talking. He would say he had

Java's poor give the regime notice

John Aglionby in Yogyakarta

SUPARMAN Wiratono has a very lean and hungry look. He has made no money in the past three days and the souvenir and drinks' vendor by Central Java's major tourist site, Borobudur temple, is struggling to cover his costs.

"It is the monetary crisis," he explains. "It's not been this quiet in the 15 years I have been here. Locals are staying at home and there are not so many foreigners coming because they think our country is covered in smog and full of political uncertainty."

"I can't even afford to buy a new Biro for my daughter to use at school."

His plight is mirrored across Indonesia. People are being hit by rising prices, company bankruptcies and bank closures as the country digests the international Monetary Fund's tough \$27 billion bailout package.

The people of Wonosari, 50 miles south of Borobudur, are also contending with a drought that has killed up to 70 per cent of their crops. Local unemployment has hit 50 per cent, mainly because a nearby stone quarrying industry has collapsed.

"This is the first time I have eaten in two days," says Budi, a former quarryman. "Those grand officials in Jakarta have no idea what it's like for us."

In the town's market prices are soaring. Rice has risen 65 per cent in the past month and cooking oil 40 per cent.

"We don't know why there are problems, no one tells us," says Taufik, a market trader. "But then what can we do about it, we're just little people in the middle of nowhere."

But the little people are starting to vent their anger.

Suharto aims for new term

PRESIDENT Suharto of Indonesia accepted his party's nomination to run for a seventh, five-year term yesterday. It is almost certain that he will win the election, which will be held in March.

It will be decided not by popular vote but by a special 1,000-member assembly dominated by supporters of the retired army general.

There had been wide speculation that Gen Suharto, facing Indonesia's worst economic crisis in decades and growing concern that he is too old or sick to remain in power, would step aside.

In the past 10 days, in west Java and east Java, mobs have run amok.

"There is an old Javanese proverb which goes: 'When you are hungry you can become blind and your mind can become confused,'" says Loekman Sutrisno, one of Indonesia's foremost social scientists and a professor at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, central Java.

He believes President Suharto has about a month to improve economic conditions. "People want to see equality. If ministers are also suffering, then the common people will be more tolerant."

President Suharto faces a major dilemma, according to the professor. "We have a political crisis as well as an economic crisis and so he cannot solve the problem without tackling the latter," he said.

"But that would mean dismantling the power base that he has cultivated for the past 30 years. Corruption, nepotism and closed government will all have to go."

"If he really really cares for the people he will effectively initiate his own downfall."

Talks fail to end Iraqi deadlock

Julian Borger Middle East Correspondent

THE future of United Nations weapons inspections in Iraq hung in the balance last night as the chief inspector, Richard Butler, held extended talks with government officials in Baghdad over access to suspected weapons sites.

UN officials reported limited progress in the form of an agreement to establish an international body of experts to discuss UN monitoring of Iraq's ballistic warheads and its alleged production of the chemical nerve agent VX. The panel is to include experts from all five permanent members of the UN Security Council, an apparent concession to Iraq's claims of US and British dominance of the UN Special Commission (Unscm).

By late last night there were no reported breakthroughs on the most divisive issues: Iraq's blocking of a US-led inspection team, a ban on inspections of presidential palaces, and a Baghdad-imposed deadline — also rejected by Mr Butler — for inspections to end.

The tense negotiations took place against a familiar backdrop of pro-government pro-

tests on the streets of Baghdad. About 5,000 demonstrators echoed Saddam Hussein's call for a jihad (holy war) against international sanctions.

Mr Butler said the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, had promised to respond to Unscm's demands for restrictions on UN inspections to be lifted.

The US and Britain have reinforced their military presence in the Gulf and refused to rule out the use of force if President Saddam fails to comply with UN inspections.

The other permanent members of the Security Council — China, France and Russia — have consistently opposed even the threat of force.

China's ambassador in Baghdad, Sun Bigan, yesterday supported Baghdad's calls for the Unscm teams to have a smaller proportion of US and British inspectors and announced that Chinese experts would soon be joining the teams.

Mr Butler has said he would consider changing the national profile of the Unscm teams. The current crisis erupted when Iraq blocked the work of an Unscm inspection team on the grounds that it included too many US and British nationals.

The Observer

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The descants of death

Ulster needs compromise as never before

WILL the paramilitary extremists heed the plea of Eilish O'Reilly who says she doesn't want anyone else to die as a reprisal for the killing of her 52-year-old brother Larry Brennan? Mr Brennan became the eighth murder victim in the province in the past six weeks when he was murdered as he sat in his taxi in Belfast's Ormeau Road. In present circumstances her plea looks unlikely to be heeded. The 90 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland who, according to Dick Spring, support the peace process are watching in numb apprehension as rejectionist terrorists on both sides shoot randomly, apparently at anyone passing by — possibly aided by disaffected members of paramilitary groups officially committed to the ceasefire.

Northern Ireland is sinking into a barbarous degradation unworthy of humanity and unacceptable even in a full war situation. No moral or political code, however distorted, can begin to justify this nihilistic, cutting down of innocent people in a political cause. Larry Brennan, according to his sister, had no political affiliations and was engaged to a Protestant. Two of his best friends were Protestant men, the very paradigm of the person a future province will have to produce if it is to live at peace with itself. Yesterday as the politicians met again, several dozen nationalists representing community groups from throughout Belfast staged a vigil protesting against the sectarian campaign. This was a poignant moment, but it also drew attention to the absence of the rest of the province. Where is the moral majority? Why aren't people taking to the streets in mass protest at the way a tiny number of terrorists, opposed all along to the talks, is threatening a rare prospect of peace by a completely amoral recourse to the bullet? Why aren't politicians on all sides urging citizens who suspect

who the murderers are to shop them to the authorities?

Northern Ireland has its own way of doing things. Maybe, as Seamus Mallon the deputy leader of the SDLP, said yesterday, the tension generated by the killings is coupled with "a curious reality, a reality that it is either them or us. Them being the people who are killing people throughout the north of Ireland and us being the legitimate political process representing the vast majority of people." Every sensible citizen will pray this is so. But as David Ervine of the Progressive Unionist Party reminded us, Northern Ireland also has the capacity "to clutch defeat from the jaws of victory. We have done it over many many years and we appear to be doing it again."

The hope is that the main parties to the talks are still there and not threatening to pull out. How long it will stay like this, if the descent of random killings goes on in the background, remains to be seen. In theory, tit-for-tat murders could go on indefinitely until one side decides that enough is enough. Perhaps by giving an intimation of what Northern Ireland could so easily return to, the latest murders will tilt the protagonists towards the sort of realistic compromise required for a solution. It beggars belief that a tiny minority of terrorists could thwart the desire of over 90 per cent of the population for a peaceful solution. In the combustible atmosphere of Northern Ireland anything could happen and nothing is predetermined. This, as never before, is a time for statesmen to rise above the daily conflicts and to embrace the chance of peace. Statesmanship requires compromise, compromise that will inevitably alienate some supporters but without which the province will once more return to a blood-stained future from which it now has a rare chance to escape.

Whose mandate in Havana?

Castro has more in common with the Pope than with Clinton

THE POPE will arrive today in Cuba on a visit which means many things to many people — which is why it may achieve rather less than anyone hopes for. The most unrealistic expectations come from the US where some of the comment portrays John Paul as a Superpope who will bring down the walls of Communism with a trumpet call for Christ. Official Cubans hope on the contrary that the Pope will undermine the US embargo by expressing more clearly his objection to a policy which inflicts suffering on ordinary people. The world media is hoping for a feast of contradictions in the juxtaposition of "two ageing leaders" from opposite ideological poles. We shall hear till we are sick of it about the ironic contrast between the state-owned peso shops and the dollar stores selling electronic goods from abroad, between socialist morality and the lycra-clad prostitutes in Havana.

The White House has grudgingly conceded that the visit is a positive one "because it will call attention to the suffering of the Cuban people under communism and their lack of religious freedom." Others invoke the example of the Pope's visit to Poland. Yet to judge from the advance coverage, Cuba's image is more likely to improve than otherwise. The visit itself is marked by improvements in official tolerance for religion — even if still circumscribed by an old-fashioned dogma of state atheism. Most visitors see US capitalist hang-ups as a stronger factor behind

the deprivations from which most Cubans suffer than Fidel Castro's socialist aims. There is general agreement that Cuba has weathered the exceptional difficulties caused by the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and that the most positive features of its system such as free health and education have survived relatively well.

There certainly are contradictions in Cuban society. Some arise from a political system which while less repressive than that of many former communist-led countries still does abuse some human rights and limit some harmless freedoms. But that is not the reason for Washington's implacable hatred of Cuba — otherwise the US would have nothing to do with the much more repressive regime in Beijing. It is impossible to measure the harmful effect on Cuba of an American vendetta which predates Castro's adoption of communism. But nearly 40 years of bullying by a powerful neighbour does not encourage the victims to relax.

President Castro has urged fellow-Cubans to turn out to greet the Pope and attend his services. He chooses now to make the most of the similarities between Christian doctrine at its best and socialist morality — also at its best. This is an optimistic equation based upon the concepts of liberation theology which the Pope has rejected before. But President Castro still has more in common with the Pope than with Bill Clinton: that is the real irony on which the US media should reflect.

Tackling crime at the weekends

Don't let alternative sentencing get into the wrong hands

AN EXTRA 600 inmates were crammed into the already overfull prison system last week. Total numbers are now creeping over 63,000, a 40-year high when recorded crime is falling. Can anything be done? Chief probation officers produced some sensible options for the Commons select committee on home affairs yesterday including wider use of attendance centres, electronic tagging, and even weekend prisons. Stand by for some Hear Hears from the prison service. The besieged prison governors called for the introduction of weekend prisons 15 months ago, an idea the director general of the prison service said was "well worth exploring". Weekend prisons may sound like liberalism gone soft, but they promote the three most important ways of reducing the chance of prisoners reoffending: keeping their homes, jobs and families intact. Holland was successfully running such schemes two decades ago,

What won't work is cramming even more offenders into existing institutions. They are already at bursting point. Extra weekend intakes when staffing levels are at their lowest would be absurd. What prison and probation chiefs want is more use of alternative accommodation at week-ends. It may not even need overnight accommodation. Currently attendance centre orders last for a maximum of three hours and are restricted to young people. Why not extend the age range and the time span to five hours linking these new orders to some form of community service? There is one danger with alternative sentences: the temptation for courts to use them not as liberal alternatives to custody but as tougher alternatives to community supervision. Sentencing climates can be changed but only by constant reminders from the Home Secretary of the advantages of a more liberal approach.



Letters to the Editor

Homing in on criminals

NORRIS McWhirter (Letters, January 16) describes extradition arrangements with our European partners in inflammatory terms. It is not true to say that rights were "carelessly tossed away".

The European Convention on Extradition was only ratified after domestic legislation passed through Parliament. The Extradition Act 1989 no longer requires a prima facie case to be made out before extradition to other European countries can be considered.

But Mr McWhirter fails to mention that before someone is returned under the Convention he or she has all the protection available under the Extradition Act 1989, which include a statutory right of habeas corpus (which does not prejudice the right to common law habeas corpus), as well as a direct route of appeal to the Home Secretary, whose decision is subject to scrutiny by judicial review.

Provided that the requirements of the law are met, it is surely right that people should be returned to stand trial for serious crimes, which they are alleged to have committed, whether they are nationals of the United Kingdom or not?

We are also prepared to do so to countries like Germany, whose Basic Law does not permit it to extradite its own nationals to us.

It is worth pointing out that those countries who do not extradite their own nationals often have wider extrajudicial jurisdiction than we do, enabling them to prosecute their own nationals for crimes committed elsewhere.

We do urge other governments to re-examine their policy and legislation if it prohibits the extradition of their own nationals. When organised and violent crime crosses borders so easily, so must the long arm of the law.

Alan Michael
 Minister of State,
 Home Office,
 Queen Anne's Gate,
 London SW1H 9AT.

Learning curve

YOUR report on the "fail-safe" South African education system (Cradle of Soweto uprising falls, January 16) appears to accept A-level results as the key criterion for improved education in the new South Africa and you quote the view that the government "cannot keep blaming the past".

Last year, in the former Transkei, I inspected what remained of the most primitive and dilapidated "primary schools" I have seen in 30 countries over the past 40 years — the legacy of 40 years of apartheid and of the century of neglect and contempt of black Africans which preceded it, under British patronage.

They were rapidly being replaced by new buildings or Portakabin classrooms, bringing the possibility of recognisable primary education to whole communities of African children for the first time. Such schools are rising all over the country.

Moreover the new Education Act requires that every school in the republic has a majority of current parents on its governing body.

I found a considerable pile of marketing material from one particular company which attempted to sell a new life policy by working on anxiety about the increased cost of funerals and the reduction in state allowances for the cost of burial. It also offered "free" gifts (a watch, a bag) as inducement.

In this case, it worked. My relation cashed in a perfectly good policy from the same

Why it needs spelling out

THANK goodness for the relativist view of correctness in spelling (Oxford's students word imperfect, January 20). I have recently analysed data from national spelling tests and found that seven-year-olds' spelling is dictated by word length and the extent that letters behave according to the "baby" alphabet (as in bat).

Eleven-year-olds apply rules to words that they are not familiar with. They often spell incorrectly because the rules simply do not work. This is demonstrated in a word from Bernard Richards' list that a seven-year-old will spell as "nat".

An older pupil will know that there is a silent letter before the "n". Usually that silent letter is "k" (90 per cent of cases). So you will get "knat" if there is uncertainty, and an imperfect rule is being applied.

English spelling is designed to produce failures. In order to be classed as educated you cannot use simple rules to generate the written form of speech.

This distorts our national capability. It is not the children's or the students' fault that they cannot spell, it is the fault of the written language. And the solution is: change the language, as other European countries have

done. Make the rules more regular and spelling will improve.

Ken Spencer
 Lecturer in Media Studies
 and Educational Technology,
 Hull University.

BECAUSE standard spelling is the established code of written communication and the one we learnt/learned to read from, it is easier on the eye and easier to read at speed. This is why it should be taught, learned/learned, and used. But like other grammatical shibboleths, we never begin a sentence with because, or end a clause with a preposition, variety in spelling (under eggsum conditions) is no more an indication of lack of intelligence, comeliness or honesty or the standards amongst Oxford's students than the variety of styles in their handwriting.

Get real: it's no big deal. Charalambos Neophytou.
 (BA in English Language and Literature from Oxford),
 Jesus College,
 Oxford.

HAVING read the front page of my Guardian yesterday, with its place about the poor spelling displayed by students at Oxford, I did my usual early morning skim of the rest of the paper.



Small shops are being sold out

YOUR correspondent John Keane (Letters, January 16) is quite right to point out that an artist's studio is charged business rates on much the same basis as a branch of a merchant bank.

We might add that a 24-hour-a-week local craft shop is charged on the same basis as a 24-hour-a-day internet cafe. The business rates per square foot on an independent delicatessen will be several times those on the delicatessen department of a large store.

The uniform business rate is based on a supposed rent and is applied regardless of the nature of the business, hours of opening, profits, turnover or indeed whether any sales at all are being made. The present rate of destruction of small shops will lead to the uniformity of the graveyard or, at best, to a general suburbia with no real places of any individuality left. What is needed is a bit of positive discrimination in

favour of small shops by making the tax graduated and selective with a tax-free allowance on (say) the first £2,000 of rateable value. In other words, by moving the rates away from small shops and on to big stores instead of the other way round as at present.

Towards the end of April last year John Major expertly ended a death-bed conversion on this issue: when will New Labour wake up to the fact that here is an area in which scores of thousands of useful jobs can be protected and created at no cost to the public purse?

Eric Lewis
 Bay Tree Books,
 2 St Johns Hill,
 Wareham,
 Dorset BH20 4NA.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear.

High price of insurance scams

BEFORE we hand over all our "public" services to private companies, let's take another look at what is still happening in the insurance industry. I recently became executor for a distant relation in his late seventies who died unexpectedly last week.

I found a considerable pile of marketing material from one particular company which attempted to sell a new life policy by working on anxiety about the increased cost of funerals and the reduction in state allowances for the cost of burial. It also offered "free" gifts (a watch, a bag) as inducement.

In this case, it worked. My relation cashed in a perfectly good policy from the same

company that he had been paying into for 15 years. It would have covered all reasonable funeral expenses short of black horses with plumes or a Mafia celebration and it was replaced by another which in effect left him uninsured for two years while the new policy matured.

Where is the "duty of care"? Who gets the "peace of mind" — the customer or the insurance company? Does public supervision and regulation of private companies affect their total disregard for their most vulnerable "customers"?

David Hopkins
 Stable Flat,
 Wadbury Mells,
 Somerset BA11 3PA.

On our women columnists

INGREDIENTS: one photographic middle-class young columnist (preferably from north London); one caricature of "old" feminism (complete with full cast of hairy, dungareed, political-correctness-thought-fests) of hostility to American feminists and to academics; one large spoonful of delusions about the non-existence of British feminists.

Method: Mix together all ingredients (taking care not to incorporate any other feminist analyses apart from straw ones).

Shamelessly promote in papers for which journalist usually writes, using informal serialisation (eg Guardian, January 11 and 18. Add Head to Head discussion (Guardian, January 17). Stir in reviews (Guardian, January 15). Fold in Culture Shop discount. Half-bake in oven to produce new trend. Voilà!

Dr Rosalind GILL
 59 Victoria Road,
 London N22 4XA.

WHY do you imagine that the fictional squabbles of the coterie of publicity-seeking media darlings who dominate your pages with their self-justifying letters, book extracts and whinges are of the slightest interest to anyone other than the tiny handful who have clashed with them, slept with them, shared drugs with them, been employed by or with them or been ditched by them?

Dump Julie Burchill and give Jeremy Hardy the additional space.
 Alun Severn.
 1 Chestnut Road,
 Oldbury B68 0AX.

YOUR correspondents (Letters, January 20) miss the point about Julie Burchill. Of course she's self-obsessed, ideologically incoherent, possibly quite mad and sad. But her saving grace is that she is always utterly reasonable, the only talent a columnist need have — the proof being that your correspondents read enough of her to spur them to write to you complaining about her.

Paul Byrne.
 101 Cavendish Road,
 London E4 9NG.

[READ the moans from your correspondents about Burchill and hope they inhaled their cornflakes. Please don't listen to their and little gripes. After managing to lose Germaine Greer you need a woman who knows her own mind rather urgently.]

Amanda Battick.
 6 Queens Drive,
 Bristol.

In brief . . .

SEARCHED your sports pages in vain (January 19) for the result of the India-Pakistan one-day international in Dhaka on Sunday. Should you choose to include a question on what is the record for a winning score in one-day internationals in one of your end-of-year quizzes, people who read only the Guardian will not have a clue.

Dipak Ghosh.
 18 Coneshill Road,
 Stirling FK9 4RT.

FOR the past two years I have been able to walk more than a few steps at a time only because trainers have cushioned the otherwise severe pain in my arthritic feet (Report, January 19). I confess that this has never worried me when visiting the Opera House. It simply did not occur to me that anyone would notice, let alone be offended by it — though I did buy a rather natter than average black pair for such occasions.

Sara Neill.
 29 Warwick Park,
 Kent TN2 5TA.

A Country Diary

CHILDREN: The proliferation of wild hollies proceeds apace in the Chilterns. They continue to sprout, as they have always done, from the crowns of pollard willows, to crop up increasingly as seedlings in gardens, and to colonise hedges. But, most dramatically, they are becoming the dominant understorey in beech and oakwoods on the acid plateaux. Sir Arthur Tansley spotted their frequency back in the thirties, but at that time they were sparse and spindly specimens. Now they are as tall and dense as hazel coppice. Across much of Chiltern Common the hollies make up impenetrable thickets below the timber trees. If they were sprouting there would probably be working parties to hack them down. But holly's ancient reputation as a magical tree has made even some Forestry Commission contractors I know reluctant to clear them. And they may have the prior claim to these territories. Chippingfield and Sarrai are one of the epicentres of holly here. Ancient hollies pack most of the hedges (and I was pleased to see one farmer with a keen sense of place planting up his drive with holly saplings this winter) as well as the woods. One bewitching ancient lane is called Olliberrie Lane at one end and Holly Hedges Lane at the other, a mile and a half away, and in a richly perplexing welter of etymological clues threads its way through Olliberrie Farm, Holly Hedges Farm and Hol-low Hedges Farm. There is even a Hollins (a grove once lopped for cattle fodder) Hall just down the road. The great resurgence of holly may reflect a decline in grazing (cattle love their foliage) on the local commons and of management in the woods. But I wonder if originally they predated the bigger trees. Hollies are amongst the first shrubs to colonise abandoned grazing land, and, as in the New Forest, their thickets serve to protect the later-arriving oaks and ash.

RICHARD MABEY

Diary
Matthew Norman

FROM Hazzard comes worrying news of Sun editor Stuart Higgins, the erstwhile Human Sponge. Addressing their Lordships about Press Complaints last week, Lord Longford recalled his efforts to win a right of reply after being attacked in a Sun leader. After several attempts, he finally got through to Higgins, but "was greeted with the words, 'We are not going to have you abusing the staff.'" Lord L took this as a reference to his own description of the Sun leader writer as "a good Christian person like Myra Hindley. That may have got under his skin a little," he admits. "However, if one dishes it out, one has to take it." Would you believe it, it gets worse. "As the conversation went on, the editor became more and more angry. He said, 'I shall not print a single word you ever write'." The editor finished with the words, "You are a pompous idiot. OK?" How odd to find the editor of the Sun showing such melodramatic over-sensitivity. Can it be that the Human Sponge has simply soaked up too much, and become a little wet?

WARM congratulations to Fiona Jones, the Labour MP for Newark. Fiona has been identified as the only new MP (except, that is, for Messrs Adams and McGuinness) yet to make a maiden speech. Asked why, after eight months, she has still not found anything to say, Miss Jones replied: "I have got no views about it at all."

In what Fleet Street vultures must view as another nail in the Diary's coffin, we have been humiliated by scooped on our own turf. My so-called rival at the Times reveals that independent TV production company Visions is adapting Basking With Bagpipes, Alastair Campbell's Forum classic, into a film that will be screened on the French porn station Euro-rica Rendez Vous. Alastair will see this foray into Euro-culture as the chance to build bridges after his recent contretemps with European journalists. Indeed, he told one Swedish woman to go away and come back when she had learnt English — a discourtesy Basking With Bagpipes experts will trace back to his disappointment with Stockholm, which he felt had "too many sex shops, not enough sex".

ASHADE envious of All's luck, perhaps, is Eve Pollard, whose own literature, as she lamented yesterday, has been ignored by film companies. Hoping to reverse this, we have, as promised, sent a copy of Double Trouble to Michael Winner, requesting his decision with a fortnight. Michael's immediate concerns lie elsewhere, however, after the savage blow to his pride in the House of Commons delivered by Tony Banks, who suggested the Millennium Experience was held in a "Nicholas" Soames's underpants. Michael takes his position as Britain's foremost sporter of outside knickers very seriously indeed: if anyone's Y-fronts are to be used in place of the Dome, they should most certainly be his.

A COLLEAGUE who was stopped in a tube station to answer a passenger survey reports a curiously. At the top of the form, in a list of jobs disqualifying their holders from doing the survey (cabbies, bus drivers, London Underground staff, and others with a potential anti-LU axe to grind) was listed the noble trade of journalism. "Ah, well, management don't want us to use people who work for newspapers," said the man with the clipboard, when asked to explain. "They reckon journalists will find the questions silly, and go and tell their diaries." Silly? Spending money asking people to give marks to "quality of train journey announcements"? Who would tell a diary about that?

MORE bad news from the bankruptcy notices of the London Evening Standard. Mr Stephen A Banks has gone bust. Mr Banks, a driving instructor from Wembley, had been trading as Impact School of Motoring.



Out of the bin and Glad to be Mad

Commentary Jonathan Freedland

ONE group in the country has fewer rights than the rest of us. No one listens to what they say, they are mocked in harsh, ugly language and some can't even vote. They can be discriminated against at work and locked up even when they have committed no crime. Comedians joke about them, headline-writers demoralise them and now the Government is set to erode their liberty yet further. They are the mentally ill, and their anger is growing — driving what could become Britain's next great movement for civil rights.

Frank Dobson catalysed the latest surge of activity, apparently announcing in the Daily Telegraph that dangerous patients released under the care in the community programme would go back to

institutions, where they could no longer make a noisy or violent nuisance of themselves. Those alarmed by the spate of murders committed by discharged schizophrenics — of which the 1992 stabbing of Jonathan Zito by Christopher Clunis is the best-known example — have greeted the Dobson idea warmly. They've had enough of "nutters on the loose" either killing random passers-by or shouting and screaming in the high street. No one wants such unfortunate sent back to the hell-and-chain asylums of the Dickensian past — but if they can be got out of the way, we'd all be much happier. Besides, it's for their own good.

That seems to be Mr Dobson's thinking, but the movement of "users" of mental health services begs to differ. They disagree that the policies of care in the community but they go further — challenging the entire canon of received wisdom on mental illness. Spend an afternoon with some of their most energetic advocates, and the prejudices fall away.

Start with the scary statistic that someone is killed by a mental patient every fortnight. It sounds like confirmation of the psycho-killer myth

— but it hardly survives scrutiny. For the roughly two dozen homicides by mental patients are a tiny fraction of the nearly 700 murders in Britain every year. Tabloid tales of "crazed killers" are statistical flim, designed to tap into a deep and ancient fear of the lunatic mad, bad and dangerous.

The "user" movement is not blind to the flaws of the current set-up. It's just that it believes care in the community has never been tried properly. "It was always about getting people out of hospital — not getting them into the community," says David Crepas-Kee, a former chairman of Survivors Speak Out. He boasts a career that includes several stints in Britain's mental institutions and at least six different diagnoses — proof, he says, that psychiatry is hardly an "accurate or absolute science". Crepas-Kee would prefer smaller, well-staffed "cottage" clinics where "users" could check themselves in when they saw turbulence coming. Such places would offer asylum — in the genuine sense of the word.

But that approach will take money — enough to fund perhaps 400 homes for the 5,000

people deemed a danger to themselves or others. More deeply, it will require a complete change in the way we think of mental illness — as profound a shift as society has made in its view of women or blacks or gays.

First it is not "them", but us. Figures cited by the Audit Commission show around one in four Britons consulting their GP over mental or emotional distress, with one in 10 said to have recognised mental health problem.

Those in serious trouble can enter a Kafkaesque spiral, in which a diagnosis becomes true just because it's been made: once branded a schizophrenic, a patient cannot object or resist treatment — after all, he or she is now a nutter. Next they might be pumped full of drugs with grotesque side-effects, so that if they weren't mad before, they

soon seem it. The "user" can say nothing. Branded as a mental patient, he is no longer a credible witness — even about his own mind.

The diagnosis becomes a mark of Cain, a bar to personal relationships and employment

many as 1,000 a year. What might have begun with a highly understandable problem — a bereaved parent hearing the voice of their dead child, for example — becomes a "symptom", then a diagnosis and ultimately a death sentence.

When one hears the personal stories of the mentally ill, one soon realises why they and their families speak of survivors' or "chemical imprisonment". Once drawn into the system, it can be impossible to break free.

It's no wonder that a kind of liberation movement has arisen, determined to assert its rights. "Users" argue that we have moved beyond blaming all black people for the actions of the odd black criminal, yet we still punish all the mentally ill for the violence of a few. We no longer tolerate headlines about yids or niggers, and yet "psycho" is still acceptable. We allow cancer patients to refuse treatment, yet we wave aside those whose illness is in not in the body, but the mind.

Like the best civil rights campaigns, some "users" celebrate the very source of their oppression. Insisting that their condition is not an affliction but a blessing. Simon Barnett, the current chair of Survivors Speak Out, signs his letters Glad to be Mad. Last year saw an effort to "reclaim Bedlam".

All this has happened while the rest of us have been stuck in the old thinking about nutcases and weirdos. The lunatics have not yet taken over the asylum, but they are raising their voice.

need spend less on safety, the NHS picks up the bill. To ensure that such deregulation becomes irreversible, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in negotiations over the multilateral agreement on investment, is insisting that strong health and safety, consumer protection and environmental controls are unfair barriers to trade.

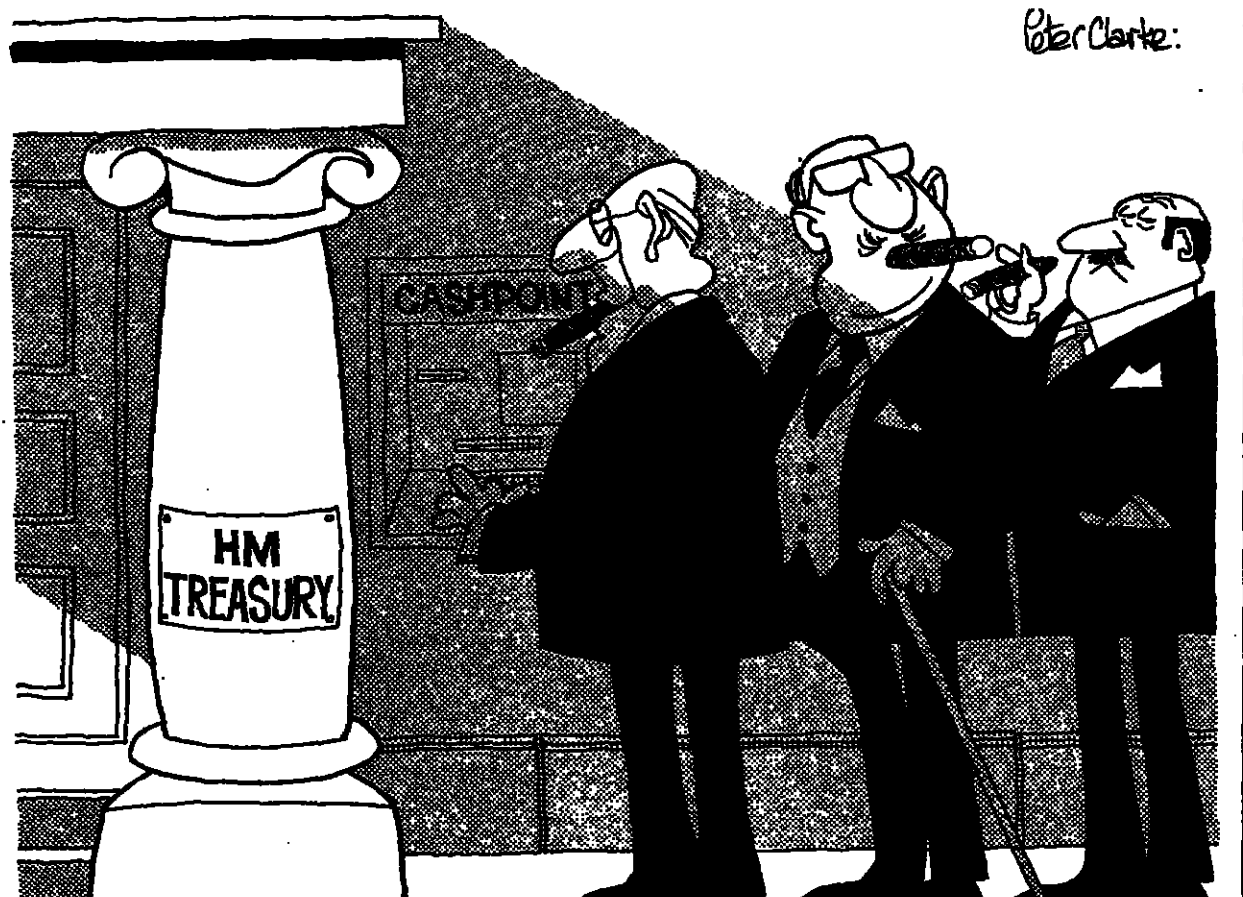
Other corporate handouts will be easier to terminate. The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) does its bit for free enterprise by pouring millions into the construction sponsorship directorate, the construction industries board and the property advisory group. The DTI is little more than a corporate dole office.

The notorious aid-and-trade provision might have been cut off, but the DTI's export credit guarantee department, the subject of a devastating Public Accounts Committee report, was rescued by corporate lobbying.

EVERY year, the department spends tens of millions of pounds greasing the cogs of the oil industry, which, incidentally, pays the Crown little more than a peppercorn rent for the seabed whose treasures it taps.

The private finance initiative is now as sticky with sweeteners as any Tory privatisation deal. The nuclear industry has been allowed to accumulate a £30 billion shortfall in its provision against the costs of decommissioning, which will have to be discharged by the taxpayer. The Ministry of Defence still conflates the defence of the nation with the defence of the nation's arms manufacturers. Even social security offers as much help to business as it does to its nominal recipients.

Family credit is, of course, a straightforward subsidy for sweatshops. So, in many cases, is housing benefit, which, incidentally, costs so much because the Government is feather-bedding the property industry by refusing to impose the planning regulations needed to bring down the price of development land. If Gordon Brown is serious about getting corporate scroungers off welfare and into work, he should start by decommissioning the DTI and reining back the DETR and the MOD.



Scroungers plc

Chancellor Gordon Brown wants to save money. George Monbiot has the answer: cut the massive drain of taxpayers' cash going in welfare payments to industry

FEW of us would argue with the premise the Chancellor made last week to launch a "war on poverty". Neither is the him that it will be partly financed through cuts in the Government's support for industry likely to prove unpopular. It has long been hard to see why, if free enterprise is as robust as successive governments have maintained, it needs state support at all. But

where is Mr Brown's blessed axe most likely to fall? You can't help entertaining misgivings about the possibility that the most visibly subsidised companies might be targeted first.

No one outside the motor industry wants to see the railways run down, yet the thought of so much public money finding its way into the hands of the privateers who run them sticks in the craw. Much of the regional

aid budget, indispensable as it is to the depressed parts of Britain, amounts to little more than relocation grants for ruthless multinationals, the UK's most successful beneficiaries of the post-war boom.

But, galling as these payments may sometimes be, they are just the hors d'oeuvre at the start of the huge free lunch the United Kingdom offers to private industry. It is seldom whispered, even among Treasury hawks, but the corporate welfare state has never been fatter. Corporate welfare suckles from so many tests of national life that it is often hard to recognise, still harder to repulse. It is arguable that the whole nation has been marked down to a bargain basement price for sale to foreign "investors".

The Department of Trade and Industry's invest-in-Britain bureau boasts to foreign businesses: "The UK has the least onerous labour regulations in Europe, with few restrictions on working hours, overtime and holidays... There is no legal requirement to recognise a trade union. Many industries operate shift work, and 24-hour, seven-days-a-week production for both men and women."

Britain is, in other words, a giant loss leader, financed by a stupendous social subsidy. Most recent deregulation amounts in practice to externalisation: businesses unload the costs they used to incur on to the rest of us.

Deregulation has been blamed for last year's alarming increase in fatal accidents at work. When companies

Never apologise, never explain



Ruairidh Nicoll

IF, today, he says he's sorry for the deaths of 14 people a quarter of a century ago, Tony Blair may think that his words will fall like a covering of snow and deaden the painful memories of atrocities carried out in Britain's name. He may think he speaks for a nation at one in our remorse.

dangerous. No republican group will hear him. The ends they seek are better served by the unrepentant voice of Colonel Derek Wilford, the paratroopers' commander at the time; or by the "arrogance" (a republican's word) of Edward Heath, the prime minister of the time.

Disraeli's famous motto was "Never complain and never explain" — later modified by generations of politicians to "Never apologise, never explain". It could be argued that if Britain apologises for Bloody Sunday then we should say sorry for every sin committed since Joan of Arc.

The apology as a national gesture has already been made irrelevant by the atrocities of the past 200 years. In the context of our continent, Norman Davies, the author of Europe, A History, sums up the behaviour of the supposedly enlightened, post-Renaissance Westerners: "There are shades of barba-

rism in 20th-century Europe which would have amazed the most barbarous of barbarians." Apologise? The question is where to stop.

Mr Blair has already expressed regret about the Irish potato famine. The Queen signed a New Zealand act of parliament apologising to the Maoris. Bill Clinton has apologised for the US's mid-century habit of carrying out experiments on the poor (albeit not for his own behaviour).

The Japanese prime minister sort of apologised to the victims of the Sun for his nation's war crimes. These apologies are only the flap of a butterfly's wings, compared to the storm of regret which could soon swamp us at this rate. Count up the number of violent deaths since 1900 and the European nations alone could end world flagellating themselves into the grave.

our own history well enough to know our own failings.

Here lies the crux. The horror of the first half of the century shocked Europe to its core. Nations and their peoples have been forced into analysing their ambitions against a blood-soaked background. We are more aware of our faults than at any time in history and we do not need to apologise to see with any more clarity.

In a small way the British Museum in London shows, as it should, just how far we have come. We are plunderers on a scale no Viking (apology from Norway please) could ever dream about, romping around the globe on gore-splattered adventures stealing anything we could get our hands on. Should we apologise and give the Biggles marbles back? Hell, no. We would be robbed of an Illustrated history that offers us pause, while Greece would get a few stones.

unbiased accounts of its foul record towards prisoners of war to the children in its own schools. Teaching unbiased history offers the wronged a far greater show of regret than a mere apology.

An apology from Mr Blair to the innocents killed on Bloody Sunday would be equally diplomatic in nature. It helped to allow us to examine the nation's actions in a clearer light, then it might be useful. If it served to save our consciences of the legacy of internment then we would be robbed of our necessary burden of guilt.

The poet Maya Angelou wrote well of the role of the past:

History, despite its wrenching pain
Cannot be unlearned, but if
faced
With courage need not be
lied again.

My part in Gordon's disappointment



Roy Hattersley

ON THE Wednesday after John Smith's funeral, Tony Blair came into my office and said that he was still not sure. I had telephoned him as soon as I got home from that strangely ennobling day in Edinburgh and urged him to stand for the Labour Party leadership. The Wednesday visit was made to tell me that he had still not made up his mind. He talked about the strain which would be put on his young family and the private pleasures that he would have to sacrifice. Most of all he talked about Gordon Brown. Both of them had always assumed that when their generation's time came, Brown would be the one. I believed then that Blair was genuinely concerned about his friend's feelings. I believe it still.

I was not wholly sympathetic to Brown's position. A year before John Smith's death I would have taken it for granted that one Scotsman would succeed the other. And I would have gladly voted for him as what one member of the Cabinet calls the thinking man's John Prescott. The tide of politics ebbs and flows, and 1994 was Tony Blair's year. Gordon Brown was clever enough to know that. As I said to Blair on that Wednesday morning, party history is littered with disappointed candidates for the Labour leadership. "Morrison, Bevan, Brown, Healey..." He stopped before I got to the end of the list.

It was easier for me. After 1983 I knew that there could be no second chance. The next election was already lost and, 10 years on, I would either be in Kimock's Cabinet or out on my ear. Anyway, it was a miracle that I became deputy. The party was unilateralist, anti-European Community and antagonistic to the market economy. I was none of those things.

With the example of Hubert Humphrey to warn me against envy, I behaved like Pollyanna.

HUBERT Humphrey was, and remains, one of my heroes. I admired him so much that one summer I flew back from Italy to be at a lunch where he was guest of honour. At one point during the meal somebody was foolish enough to ask what it felt like to be passed over — unjustly, of course — for the presidency of the United States. Humphrey — the Democratic Party's happy warrior — said that every night he

looked into the dark between bed and ceiling and thought, "I should not be here. I should be in the White House." I decided there and then that I would not throw my life away on regret.

Gordon Brown is sensible enough to feel the same. His problem, I suspect, is not the frustration of thwarted ambition, but the hubris of his friends. When Denis Healey was denied the leadership, there was no court to plot for a restoration — the Bourbons across the border in Austria, waiting for the revolution to prove a failure. His rejection was the greatest absurdity in the Labour Party's bewildering history. And, by supporting his opponent, MPs (who wanted to damage the party in preparation for their defection to the SDP) made the farce squallid. Unfortunately, New Labour, having abandoned its ideological roots, encourages the creation of fan clubs. If politicians do not argue about rival philosophies, they cannot compete personalities. And the Prime Minister's special brand of politics-free politics promotes that process. Last week's speech — the beginning of the welfare reform crusade — was meant to reassure doubters that social security was safe in Tony Blair's hands. He did not attempt that difficult task by telling his audience what changes he proposed. He simply insisted that they could trust him. Politicians who behave like Billy Graham cannot complain if converts get carried away.

IN THIS long history of political rivalry, it has usually been the acolytes who cause the trouble. The rebels and aspirants take defeat and frustration with the self-confident sophistication to be expected of anyone senior enough to qualify for nomination. The supporters cling to the lost leaders for warmth and comfort. The foot soldiers fear that they will lose everything when the war is lost. Very often they are right. The defeated general is promoted and they are demobilised.

So they go on arguing that at least they fought on the right side. The newspapers pick up every bitter aside, bad taste joke and half-thought-out criticism and, quite rightly from their point of view, elevate the low gossip into high principle. From a journalist's point of view it is all the more exciting when the title battle is associated with a history of intrigue — Peter Mandelson, in 1994 a back-bencher of absolute no importance, brokering a deal between two leadership candidates. Add to that the Labour leadership's determination to stifle all dissent and the scene is set for a bogus clash of wills and a counterfeit collision of egos. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown can be acquitted of direct responsibility for last week's nonsense. But they have created a party in which that sort of absurdity is difficult to avoid.

Every day it's a new crisis



But what of the victims of yesterday's crises who remain in refugee camps for years or who return home to find their country all but destroyed?

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John Robinson

Diplomat with a European dream

JOHNSON Robinson, who has died aged 72, was one of the first to fly the flag in the Foreign Office for Britain's integration into Europe and played a vital role in our 1973 entry into the European Community.

He was born in London and educated at Westminster School. After Christ Church, Oxford, he joined the Foreign Office in 1949. Postings followed to New Delhi, Helsinki and the commercial department of the Paris Embassy. But it was on his return to the Foreign Office to work on European economic affairs in 1958 that he found his métier.

It cannot have seemed a promising assignment in the 1950s Whitehall was united in

thinking European integration a pipedream. The Foreign Office did not think that the German lion would ever lie down with the French lamb. The barons of the Treasury and the Board of Trade considered that free trade completely within Europe would never be acceptable, in particular to a France protectionist since Colbert. The way forward, everyone in London agreed, was to reduce trade barriers modestly and multilaterally, thus enabling Britain to remain apart from Europe, and to retain its preferential trading links with the Commonwealth and its special relationship with the United States.

But few of the postwar entrants to Whitehall began to challenge these assumptions. Robinson was foremost among them. In the 1950s, when overseas economic questions came up for discussion in Whitehall, the Foreign Office line would be one of magisterial indifference. Suddenly it began to change. A young, forceful diplomat was challenging other departments on their own ground. So Robinson was a natural candidate for the delegation which, following Harold Macmillan's application in 1960, first sought to negotiate Britain's accession to the European Community. Robinson moved to Brussels and played a role far more important than warranted by his rank or years. Edward Heath, who as

Lord Privy Seal headed the negotiating team, thought particularly highly of him. After General de Gaulle vetoed the British application in 1963, Robinson stayed at the now strengthened, permanent United Kingdom delegation to the European Community in Brussels, developing still further his knowledge of the Community scene. And when negotiations for entry started again in 1970, he was not only a natural but an indispensable choice for a key role.

He fulfilled this as, in effect the deputy and trouble shooter of Sir C. O'Neill, appointed in 1970 as the head of official level of the delegation. It was a negotiation of formidable complexity, not least because the Community

had broadened and deepened its scope since the failure of Britain's previous attempt at entry. At home opposition was rife, the difficulty of finding solutions acceptable to British domestic and overseas interests never-ending.

A strategy was needed. In June 1970 Robinson wrote a paper for discreet circulation in Whitehall, setting out, as he saw it, the likely course of the negotiations. They would start in the early summer, become seriously engaged after the summer break, but then become bogged down before French opposition. A summit meeting would then be required with the French, possibly in the spring of 1971. If successful this would lead to settling most outstanding

questions that summer, and concluding around the end of the year. Then 1972 could be devoted to getting parliamentary approval. Entry would follow on January 1, 1973.

As these events had been predicted, so, like a Roman prophecy, they unfolded. At the end of the negotiations O'Neill wrote that Robinson's contribution had been indispensable. "He knew everybody and everything." He was the main architect of our entry.

His later years were less happy. After a spell as ambassador to Algeria he moved to Washington in 1977 as minister and deputy to the ambassador, Peter Jay. Both were men of exceptional quality but a difference of tempera-

ment did not make for an easy working relationship. In 1980 Robinson became ambassador to Israel. He decided to take early retirement in 1981. His main achievement was his work on Europe where his uninterrupted spell of 16 years on European Community affairs gave him an unrivalled authority in this field. But he was not simply a man with a cause, a lively sense of humour made him one of the most charming of companions, and he enjoyed the pleasures of French country life. But he had a steady edge and neither rank nor protocol would dissuade him from pressing his case when he thought it in the public interest. This, his knowledge and a capacity for hard work

marked him out from early years one of the most formidable diplomats of his generation. It is sad that his remarkable achievements did not finally get the recognition they deserved.

He married Marianne Berger in 1952 with whom he had a son and daughter.

Sir Roy Desman
John Armstrong Robinson, diplomat, born December 18, 1925; died January 16, 1998



Robinson... challenged the Foreign Office

Sir Roy Desman

John Armstrong Robinson, diplomat, born December 18, 1925; died January 16, 1998

Air Vice-Marshal Wilfrid Oulton

Paving the way for the H-bomb

AIR Vice-Marshal Wilfrid Oulton, who has died aged 86, commanded the RAF task force which carried out the first British hydrogen-bomb tests at Christmas Island in the Pacific in May 1957. "Operation Grapple" entailed orchestrating 4,000 men and thousands of tonnes of supplies.

Born in south Wales and educated in Aberllyry, he was commissioned into the RAF in 1931. On the outbreak of war Oulton was assigned to 217 Squadron, Coastal Command, flying twin-engined Ansons over the Western Approaches and won the first of three mentions in despatches. Then he was sent to Washington as a navigational training adviser for allied aircrew.

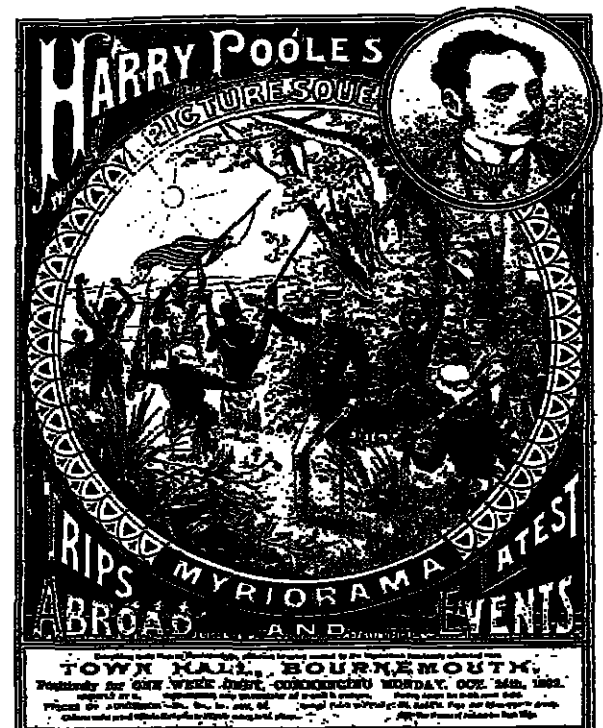
As the Battle of the Atlantic climaxed in 1943, Wing-Commander Oulton was in charge of Coastal Command's 58 Squadron of Halifax bombers. Over the Bay of Biscay that May his crew sighted a surfaced U-boat and in a textbook attack, Oulton straddled U663 with depth charges. The boat reared up and sank by the stern, killing all aboard. That month too Oulton's aircraft sank U643, a vital supply submarine, and took a half share in the destruction of U563 which had sunk nine merchant ships and the destroyer HMS Cosack. Oulton was awarded the DFC and the DSO.

He later commanded bases in the Azores and Northern Ireland, before returning after the war to the Air Ministry in the new air-control department, where he helped to establish the control system for the new Heathrow airport. A series of staff posts ensued.

His last post before retirement in 1960 was at Coastal Command headquarters, as senior air staff officer. He was made CBE in 1953 and CB in 1958. After the RAF he went to work for EMI Electronics and remained active in business and in professional bodies well into old age. He also continued to play squash into his eighties.

Oulton married Sarah Davies in 1935 and they had three sons, all of whom became airmen. In 1991, after Sarah's death, he married Leticia Sara Malcom.

Dan van der Vat
Wilfrid Ewart Oulton, airman, born July 27, 1911; died October 31, 1997



Jim Poole

Showman of the cinema

JIM POOLE, who has died aged 86, was the last in the male line of a remarkable dynasty of showmen whose outstanding contribution to the popular visual culture of the 19th century was "Poole's Myriorama". A forerunner of the cinema, hugely popular with Victorians, the Myriorama was an elaboration of an earlier 19th century show, the "moving panorama". This consisted of a long painted canvas - some were claimed, no doubt mendaciously, to be three or four miles in length - passed from one roller to another, so that the pictures appeared in endless succession in a prosaic opening, giving much the effect of an extended panning shot in a film.

The Pooles elaborated this with models and special effects. In *The Battle of Alexandria*, for instance, charges of gun-cotton and gunpowder were let off from miniature painted naval guns - with only occasional serious accidents. The shows were further enlivened with orchestras, singers, comedians and magicians. Generally the Myriorama offered a *Trip Around the World*, but topical events like *The Transatlantic War* or, later, *The Sinking of the Titanic* would merit special presentations.

The dynasty was founded by Charles and George W. Poole, who started out as musicians with the touring panorama of Moses Gompertz,

and set up on their own in the late 1870s. They were succeeded by their five nephews, who by 1900 were touring seven shows between them for 40 weeks of every year. Poole's father, John Reginald, was the son of the dominant sibling, Charles William, and from him inherited management of the business.

The Pooles soon introduced films into their shows, and were quick to recognise that with the arrival of cinema, the old, elaborate touring films had had their day. They began to buy theatres and convert them into cinemas, and in 1906 Jim's father leased the Synod Hall, Edinburgh, and converted it into a cinema. Until the end of the 1920s, though, for old time's sake, the Myriorama would be revived there every Christmas and New Year.

Thus in his boyhood Jim was able to study the style of



Starry night... Jim Poole with actress Carol Channing at the 1968 conference of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association of which he became president. Above left, a poster advertising Poole's Myriorama, showing in Bournemouth in October 1892

the thrum machine during a romantic scene in a Mary Pickford film, and to have brought down a sizeable area of ceiling with *The Battle of Trafalgar*.

After school in Edinburgh and Durham he studied engineering at Heriot Watt Uni-

versity while learning to be a cinema projectionist. At 21 he was despatched to manage the family's new Aberdeen cinema, the Regent and the Palace - the Super Two - where he was soon known for his adventurous advertising methods. In 1937 the Pooles opened a new Edinburgh cinema, the Rocco, Gorgie Road, in high Art Deco style. With other cinemas in Ipswich, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stourbridge, and his father's absorption in Edinburgh local affairs - he was Bailie Poole, and three times refused the offer of appointment as Lord

Provost - Jim found himself more and more responsible for the management of the family business, which he was to take over entirely with his father's death in 1950.

His war service as forces films officer in the Middle East gave him a taste for foreign-language films, and

when he returned to civilian life he had the idea of buying the King's, a crumbling theatre built in 1914, and turning it into Edinburgh's first art-house, renamed the Cameo. His father opposed the idea and Jim found himself financing the project personally. Opened in 1947, the Cameo flourished and, despite powerful opposition from church groups, Jim installed a bar, the first in an Edinburgh cinema. Although it eventually passed into other hands, the Cameo still maintains Jim's programming standards, and is a centre for the annual Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Each Edinburgh cinema had its own style. The Rocco was essentially a family theatre. In later years the Synod Hall - always known as "The Pooles" - specialised in horror films. The building

was well suited to this. Poole's daughter Celia remembers her childhood terror of passing through the gloomy corridors or of being alone in the auditorium. With 16 exits the place was a practical nightmare for managers, and it was a favourite local sport to see how many of your friends you could get in without buying a ticket. There was also a mysterious patron, never caught, who for years always sounded a bugle at moments of boredom or disapproval.

Jim kept up the family standards of showmanship. A large, genial man with a commanding personality and passions for music, theatre, dogs and the good life, he had a dramatic taste in clothes, especially ties. He personally conducted one of the most successful Saturday morning Mickey Mouse clubs in the country. In later years he would be stopped in the street by now quite elderly people who recalled nostalgically his welcoming cry of "Hiya, Members and their responding yell of "R-O-X-Y Rocc! Hiya, Chief". "Can't hear you", he would shout back at his audience of 2,000. "Try again!"

David Robinson
John Kenneth Stafford Poole, showman and cinema exhibitor, born July 7, 1911; died January 16, 1998

Birthdays

Dr Alan Rapp, director, Victoria and Albert Museum, 56; Geena Davis, actress, 31; Plácido Domingo, tenor, 57; George Foulkes, Labour MP, 56; Barbara Harvey, historian, 70; Jack Nicklaus, golfer, 58; Ursula Owen, editor, index on Censorship, 61; Paul Potts, editor-in-chief, Press Association, 48; Paul Scofield, actor, 76; Martin Shaw, actor, 53; Laurence Whistler, glass-engraver, 86.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

IN THE CITY Notebook, (page 18, January 16), we incorrectly stated that the Gloucestershire Gloucester building society decided to merge with Lloyds Bank (now Lloyds TSB) in 1992. The intention to merge was announced on April 21, 1994, and the deal was completed on August 1, 1995.

AN ARTICLE headed, *Raw recruits on the blocks*, (page 19, Guardian Education, January 13), referred to "a state or grant-maintained school", giving the impression that grant-maintained (GM) schools are somehow separate from the state education system. This is untrue. While GM schools have opted out of the control of the local education authority, they have not opted out of the state-maintained sector. They receive their finances (still in many ways calculated by the LEA) from the Funding Agency for Schools, rather than the LEA. As state schools, they do not charge parents fees and should not be confused with independent schools.

THERE was a misquotation from GM Hopkins's poem, *Spring and Fall*, in a column of page 14, January 19. He did not write "Mum, I've been crying / Over Goldengrove unleaving?" The word he used was "unleaving".

THERE was a misprint in Ted Hughes's poem, *St Boniface's*, (page 3, 6 yesterday), in a column of page 14, January 19. He did not write "Those long, balladic, mangled fingers. We said monks".

THE TELEPHONE number for JetLife Holidays, published at the end of Simon Roggatt's article, *American English*, (page 45, Weekend, January 17), should have read 01322 614801.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Reader Editor, Ian Mayes, by telephoning 0171 239 5559 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 239 5897. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Death Notices

BENNETT, Ellen, on 12th January 1998, of high, elderly lady by family and friends. Buried at Willesden Cemetery, London. Family flowers only, please. Donations to charity if desired to A.R.C. may be made to St. Mary's Church, The Square, Willesden, W12 5JF.

GOUDON, John, died on January 15th 1998 at Springwood, Epsom, Surrey, aged 72. Late of Springwood, Epsom, Surrey. Buried at Epsom Cemetery. Family flowers only, please. Donations to charity if desired to A.R.C. may be made to St. Mary's Church, The Square, Willesden, W12 5JF.

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Sex files

1998: The first screen kiss The Edison Manufacturing Company's film punchily titled *The Kiss Between My Ireland and John Rice* (taken from the play *Whodunnit*) led to calls for censorship when (perhaps unsurprisingly) it was seen to consist entirely of two people snogging. "The Chap Book" said: "The lifeline version, bestial enough in itself, was nothing compared with this. Their unbridled kissing magnified to gargantuan proportions and repeated twice is obviously loathsome." But that is pretty much what you'd expect from a monthly journal exclusively

for those with sore lips. 1928: It probably comes as no surprise to hear that with the invention of the cine camera, people became obsessed with seeing what all human experience looked like when viewed through it. Turn of the century film makers, for the delectation of their audiences, showed everything from medical operations to executions. And, in the same way as modern day couples, at first content to rush about with a camcorder surprising each other in the bath or filming the cat being sick, eventually (about twenty minutes later) find their thoughts turning to filming themselves shagging, so did the film makers of the time.

All was anarchy at the time with anyone who could get their hands on a camera making films and charging people to see them in London smoking rooms and Parisian brothels. But as far as the stuff made for general public viewing goes, it is fairly tame stuff - gratuitous violence was common but nudity was rare. An amusing history of sex in

the movies, on the Empire Website which can be found at <http://www.etrack.com/empire>

Whomping

WORK with this: a secluded stretch of shoreline, palm trees swaying, waves crashing. You can taste the expectation, the impending release. You close your eyes and lose yourself - yes, Yasmine, yes - rolling madly on the sand like a sea lion in heat. Slow down there, Johnny Love. This ain't Baywatch, and Yasmine Eleeth is nowhere in sight. It's January and as cold as a well-digger's ass out here. Yes, you are taking a roll on the beach. But it's "cause a big, nasty wave just spit you out like a putrid oyster. And you, with your marbles still rattling, head straight back for more bodywhomping. Yes, bodywhomping. Think of it as surfing minus the rideable cushion of water and the board. At whomp sites - Marine Street in La Jolla, California, is one of the most rip-roaring - the water gets

sucked out of the wave and leaves otherwise respectable adults staring down the curl at a lot of sand. All you need to whomp is a piece of beach angled like a pizza slice on edge, some winter waves, and the sense of adventure you shelled when you started wearing a necktie.

So why pursue this shoreline madness? It's not to get a surfer girl. In fact the only

hard nipples within miles belong to the other shivering-cold guys who've come out for a good sea-sleeping. "It's about the thrill of losing control," says a resident lifeguard. You can have whomping fun whomping, according to *American Esquire*.

Wage slaves
WORK in most societies is bound up with three fundamental human forces: money, identity and the creative urge. You are what you buy, and you are what you do; and you're nobody if you haven't got something to show for it.

We live in a society in which work is to some people a means of abolishing individual identity, stifling creativity and putting a lid on freedom, yet to others work in fact facilitates these things in their lives.

But given that work could be seen to be the root of most, if not all, human suffering, it's easy to regard it as a Bad Thing. If we all refuse to sell our skills to employers who

aggregate them, mark them up, and sell them on at a profit, will we somehow break the chains of wage-slavery and be free to pursue what we really want to do? How work works, in *Esquire* magazine.

School's in
FEBRUARY 1978, Grange Hill, series one, episode one. At registration Tucker Jenkins, rebel without a tie, is aiming a rubber band at the back of Trisha Yates' head. Mr Foster intervenes.

"Trying to put that young girl's eye out were you? Were you born stupid? I see, it's something you developed yourself, is it? (Swift knuckle to top of Tucker's head.) Don't let me catch you doing that again, do you understand?"

Yes, we understood. For the first time on Kids TV, the BBC was excusing parent loving, police respecting, homework-in-on-time images of childhood in favour of something more realistic. The debut episode of Grange

Hill was less Enid Blyton adventure than digging the trenches in preparation for battle. Girls v Boys, Teachers v Pupils, Evil v Good, Parents v Offspring, Sixth Formers v First Years, Race and Class conflicts were soon added to the metaphorical pressure cooker (that technological wonder of the seventies) and, come the second series, the kids were revolting.

Grange Hill's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was a riot in the canteen over uniform organised by the school's militant group SAG. Questions were raised in the House, complaints poured in from the Shires, and Pink Floyd cashed in on the class war with the number one Another Brick in the Wall. School was the new rock 'n' roll.

The Face wishes Grange Hill a happy 20th birthday.

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk, fax 0171-718 4366, write Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Hannah Pool

Require... sea-sleeping

Require... sea-sleeping

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Require... sea-sleeping

Require... sea-sleeping

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FinanceGuardian

British drugs company hopes to seal £77bn deal with Americans

SmithKline takes a shot at world's biggest merger

Julia Finch
and Pauline Springett

DRUG company shares went into overdrive yesterday as British giant SmithKline Beecham confirmed it is working on plans for the world's biggest corporate merger.

Rumours of a £77 billion link with rival US group American Home Products had been circulating in the stock market for some days, but an official statement from SmithKline sent shares to new peaks. The company's shares soared by 72p to 815p as it confirmed merger talks, though they fell back to 805p at 7.25p. At the turn of the year they stood at 630p, 240p ahead of their 12-month low. AHP shares rose 14p to 240p before falling back slightly.

If it goes ahead, the merger is bound to cost jobs, particularly among the 8,300 UK staff if the company relocates in the US. One analyst believed savings could total £2.8 billion a year.

Last night City analysts said the proposed deal could start a wave of other mega-mergers in the pharmaceuticals sector. Earlier Glaxo added 30p to £16.09, while Zeneca, long regarded as a bid target, went up 75p to £23.74. SmithKline's proposed deal with AHP would make the combined group the largest drugs manufacturer in the world. The enormous cost of developing new drugs is the driving force behind such



Chief executive Jan Leschly of SmithKline Beecham, the man at the centre of what could be the world's biggest merger

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK MARTIN

mergers. In the past three years, Glaxo has merged with Wellcome; Swiss company Sandoz and Ciba have joined up as Novartis, and Swedish group Pharmacia has merged with AHP. SmithKline has a stock market value of £45 billion, while AHP is valued at £32 billion. Together they would have annual sales of

more than £17 billion. Their portfolios include some of the world's best known pharmaceutical and over-the-counter brand names. Kevin Wilson of Solomon Smith Barney said: "It goes ahead they will have changed the competitive landscape and others would be likely to follow." Although SmithKline de-

scribed their negotiations with AHP as "merger" talks, most analysts said SKB would be the dominant partner. The British company's chief executive, Jan Leschly, is thought to be the front runner for the top job if the companies combined. Mr Leschly, who learned his trade in the US, is already paid American-style wages.

Some analysts, however, warned that while the deal may look at first glance like a good move for SmithKline, it could find itself caught up in potentially expensive litigation facing AHP. It has run into problems with its anti-obesity drugs Redux and fen-phen, which it was forced to withdraw after worries about side effects including heart

and lung damage. The bill for remedial action could top \$4 billion (£2.5 billion) plus huge legal costs, say analysts. SmithKline yesterday insisted that the deal was far from certain. Mr Leschly said: "There can be no assurances that any such transaction would be agreed or as to what the terms of such transaction would be."

Notebook

Health warning on mega-mergers



Edited by
Alex Brummer

ANYONE who believed that merger-mania peaked on Mad Monday in October last year, when 280 billion of bids were unveiled in one trading session, reckoned without a new round of pharmaceutical combinations. The prospective £77 billion get-together of SmithKline Beecham, nominally a UK company, and American Home Products would outstrip all previous amalgamations in terms of size, including the recent bank and telecommunications takeovers.

It is always possible to construct a business rationale for such deals. The pharmaceutical industry analysts were quick to wax lyrical about this combination and the value for shareholders. Among the reasons postulated as justifying a SmithKline-AHP deal were synergies in the two companies' drugs pipelines; the opportunity for SmithKline to make even better use of its wholesale drug distributor DSP; potential cost savings of up to 25 per cent and a succession problem at AHP with SmithKline's Jan Leschly seen as the likely boss of the combined group.

Certainly, AHP as a stand alone group in a field of increasingly huge drug companies might feel vulnerable, especially as it has liability problems as a result of its sales of Fondamin and Redux, a popular diet regime found to cause heart valve damage in some patients. This still unquantified liability could cost AHP several billion dollars — a point which will not be lost on Mr Leschly as the terms of the merger are set.

As is known from the Glaxo-Wellcome merger in Britain, one soft target in pharmaceutical mergers is the research and development budget. One reason why drug companies seek mergers to expand, rather than wait for new products, is that it is cheaper to buy tried and tested ethical drugs and well known over-the-counter brands — in AHP's case Advil, Chap Stick and Preparation H — than start from scratch. Given that SmithKline would seem to be the dominant partner in this deal, one would hope that its advanced research facilities at Harlow in Essex would be safe: but given that SmithKline would become even more of a US outfit were this merger to be completed, even that is not certain.

What is clear is that if SmithKline and AHP do pull off their deal, without too much interference from the anti-trust/competition authorities in Washington and Brussels, other leading drug companies will feel vulnerable and may come under pressure to bring their own

costs down and improve distribution through further deals. This is propelling the shares of companies like Zeneca. But there must be concern that, although there are compelling needs for size in a global market, too many mega-mergers among drug companies will slow development and progress for a health-based industry which is still in its infancy.

Euro battle

MANY of the City's great and good gathered in the Bank of England yesterday for the annual pep talk on preparation for the coming of the euro. The comfortable message emerging from Threadneedle Street is that, though plenty of work remains to be done at home and abroad and the cost is likely to run into hundreds of millions of pounds, the City is well placed to retain its pre-eminence among Europe's financial centres.

The political landscape has changed since the Bank's first such euro-gathering, a fact emphasised by Chancellor Gordon Brown's presence with his now familiar — but still welcome — message that British membership of the single currency will be determined on pragmatic economic grounds.

Mr Brown was also bearing at least one first and possibly two. The next financial bill will include changes which should help clear up tax problems that could face City firms dealing in euros. Tantalisingly, the Chancellor also hinted that he could soon be able to address the issue of euro-denominated gilts "quite soon". Of course UK governments have borrowed in foreign currencies before — particularly dollars and euros. There is even a euro note. But though a euro-gilt would hardly commit Britain to monetary union, it would be a handy and practical way of signalling friendly intentions towards the single currency project. It wouldn't harm the City's prospects either.

Bank lines

THE glory days for investment banking appear to be over, for the time being, judging from the final quarter results out of New York. Nor are things looking bright at Merrill Lynch and others have taken a serious knock from Asia and other markets, although full year earnings at Merrill's were still 18 per cent higher at \$1.51 billion. More worrying perhaps is the report from JP Morgan, considering the most solid of US houses: it caught a cold in equity derivatives in the final quarter, losing \$64 million, joining NatWest and Citibank as derivative victims in 1997. Clearly, it pays to be in tamer businesses like asset management and corporate finance, as the bottom lines from Paine Webber and Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette show. Goldman Sachs is already dreaming of a strong first quarter in 1998.

Straw orders tax havens inquiry

Alan Travis
and Roger Cowe

A Government attempt to tackle money laundering and financial crime in Britain's semi-independent offshore tax havens of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man, was last night unveiled by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

The six-month inquiry into how the offshore banking system is regulated on the three islands will look into the concerns about the growing use of the Channel Islands as a money laundering centre for international drug gangsters. Nine months ago the United States paid a \$1 million reward to the Jersey police for their role in unmasking the money

laundering operation of a major Texan drug smuggler on the island.

Andrew Edwards, a former Treasury official who was the Government's adviser on the "fat cat" pay rises of Britain's privatised industry chiefs, will head the six-month official review, which will look in detail at how reports of "suspicious transactions" are handled, dealt with, and at the willingness of the island authorities to secure prosecutions in financial crime cases.

The review will include an examination of money laundering and tax offences, but will not cover tax loopholes or other tax avoidance issues. Banking and other financial services account for more than 50 per cent of the income of Jersey and Guernsey.

TOURIST RATES — BANK BELLS

Australia 2.411	France 9.798	Italy 2.901	Singapore 2.92
Austria 2.059	Germany 9.798	Japan 1.036	South Africa 2.95
Belgium 60.41	Greece 462.75	Netherlands 3.287	Sweden 2.96 89
Canada 2.229	Hong Kong 12.31	New Zealand 2.74	Switzerland 12.92
Cyprus 0.855	India 63.77	Norway 12.05	Turkey 340.250
Denmark 11.22	Ireland 1.157	Portugal 208.25	USA 1.6012
Finland 8.927	Israel 5.98	Saudi Arabia 6.04	

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

The British

Global leader in vaccines

SMITHKLINE Beecham ranks as the 28th largest UK company and the fourth largest UK company — behind only Glaxo, BP and Lloyds TSB. Such is its size and influence that a 10p move in its share-price instantly adds or cuts three points from the FTSE 100 index, writes Julia Finch.

The transatlantic drugs group, based in Brentford, west London, was formed in 1989 when the UK's Beecham Group merged with Philadelphia-based SmithKline Beecham. Its head is Jan Leschly, aged 57, the former Danish Davis Cup tennis player who, last year, picked up a £2.5 million pay and pensions package. The company is the world's biggest supplier of

vaccines, last year delivering 750,000 doses to 130 countries. One of its projects is adding a chicken pox vaccine to the childhood measles, mumps and rubella inoculation.

The company spends £14 million a day on research and, worldwide, 400 prescriptions are written every minute for SKB drugs. Founded by Thomas Beecham in 1842, and launched with the laxative Beecham's Pills, the firm grew steadily to include brand names such as Macleane's, Lucozade and Brylcreem.

In the 1940s, laboratories were established at Brickham Park, Surrey, where researchers made their most important discovery — the penicillin nucleus. Though

hailed as a wonder drug in the 1940s, penicillin quickly encountered resistant bacteria and was taken over by the semi-synthetic penicillins produced by Beecham.

SmithKline was founded in 1830 by two brothers-in-law and has enjoyed several medical breakthroughs, including the first effective mental health treatment and hepatitis vaccines. Its most notable discovery was Tagamet, a stomach ulcer treatment launched in the UK 22 years ago. In 1989, SmithKline's Sir James Black won the Nobel prize for his work on the discovery.

The combined group has three core businesses — prescription drugs, consumer healthcare products, and healthcare services.

SB Joining forces

SmithKline Beecham	American Home Products
£28.0bn	£28.0bn
£1.6bn	£1.1bn
£45bn	£32.2bn
53,000	60,000
130	145

Pharmaceuticals brands

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Augmentin: Antibiotic Serono: New generation antidepressant Kytril: Nausea treatment for chemotherapy patients Engerix: Genetically engineered hepatitis B vaccine Famvir: Shingles and genital herpes treatment Hydrexin: Ovarian cancer treatment Cialis: Erectile dysfunction and congestive heart failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indinavir: HIV inhibitor Papamycin: Endothelial replacement Neoplast: Contraceptive Elixave: Antidepressant Lodine: Anti-inflammatory Nigrolin: Asthma treatment Alimem: Corticosteroid pill
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Consumer brands

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedex: Pantolol, Resolol, Solopadine: Painkillers Blackmore: Contac, Night Nyne: Cough/cold remedies Nicotex: Gum: Nicotex patches: Anti-smoking Archives: Liver Salt, Eno, Gaviscon, Milk of Magnesia, Tums: Indigestion/upset stomach remedies Hedex: Lucozade, Ribena: Drinks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advil: Painkiller/fever reducer and cold/flu relief Chap Stick: Lip balm Preparation H: Haemorrhoid treatment Pharmaceutical: Cough and cold remedies, painkillers Robitussin: Cough syrup
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Prescription drug companies

Company	Revenue (\$bn)
SmithKline Beecham	28.0
American Home Products	28.0
Glaxo	16.0
Novartis	15.0
Roche	14.0
Merck	13.0
Abbott	12.0
Sanofi-Sintabo	11.0
Boehringer-Ingelheim	10.0
Novartis	9.0
Roche	8.0
Merck	7.0
Abbott	6.0
Sanofi-Sintabo	5.0
Boehringer-Ingelheim	4.0
Novartis	3.0
Roche	2.0
Merck	1.0
Abbott	0.5

Eurostar warning as LCR struggles to raise rail link cash

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

THE Government is threatening to take control of the prestigious Eurostar service between London and Paris if plans to build the £3.4 billion Channel Tunnel rail link from St Pancras to Folkestone collapse.

The deputy prime minister, John Prescott, has warned London and Continental Railways, the company developing the pro-

ject, that he will act to protect Eurostar if LCR cannot deliver.

This is the first suggestion by the Government that it is prepared to take part of the privatised railway back into the public sector. With it would come Waterloo International, and 18 trains each capable of carrying almost 800 passengers.

LCR has also failed to introduce regional Eurostar services from northern cities, which were promised by the Conservatives.

Whitehall sources stressed that, although the Government has no complaints with LCR's engineering skills, it is becoming increasingly anxious at the company's ability to raise £2.4 billion as its contribution to the line. LCR must produce its share within the next two years before it sees the Treasury's £1 billion. It has been trying to raise the capital and find other backers for two years.

It is looking to other potentially interested parties

like Railtrack for help towards a flotation by the middle of the year. To bolster confidence it has named preferred bidders for £200 million worth of tunnelling work. Mr Prescott will not provide extra cash from the taxpayer if the private sector turns cold on the scheme. That is why he is ready to protect Eurostar, a project run in co-operation with the French and Belgian governments.

Eurostar was handed over to LCR when it was

awarded the Channel tunnel rail link contract by the Conservatives. The transfer removed a heavy loss-maker from the public purse, and LCR promised to turn it into a profitable business. It has only partly succeeded. Eurostar has become a popular form of travel and has outshone the airlines, but received a setback with the Channel Tunnel fire in November, 1996.

When it took over, Eurostar was carrying three million passengers a year.

That number has now doubled, but is still short of the customers LCR hoped to attract before it could start building the rail link. Mr Prescott has the previous government's authority to act because the assets were only transferred to LCR until it met its obligations to build the route. If the plan collapses, the Government would be entitled to take back St Pancras station and tracts of land in central and east London, through which the line is due to run.

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Football

McManaman denies Barca deal

John Duncan

BARCELONA refused last night to confirm or deny reports that they have an agreement in place to sign Steve McManaman after the World Cup.

"The club has nothing to say on it," said Josep Maria Tena, a club spokesman. "Officially there is no confirmation at this stage. If it were true we wouldn't say."

Tena said he had no knowledge of the reported statements of the club vice-president Joan Gaspart that McManaman's representative had agreed the Liverpool player would sign for Barcelona after the World Cup if their coach wanted him.

Gaspart has the reputation as an outspoken maverick and such unauthorised statements are not uncommon in Spain.

However, McManaman denied that any deal was done with Barcelona. "How can I be expected to comment on something that has no truth whatsoever," he said. "The Portuguese winger Jose Dominguez said he would not be joining Southampton less than six months after signing for Tottenham Hotspur. The Saints manager Dave Jones had indicated that he was willing to bid £15 million for the 23-year-old, saying: 'He is a quality player and I am always interested in signing quality players. I'm looking to strengthen my squad particularly on the left-hand side.'"

However, Dominguez retorted: "I was worried and so I rang the chairman. And Sugar and he told me I was an important player and part of the club's plans. I shouldn't have worried really. I've got a four-year contract with Tottenham, the fans love me, and I love playing for them."

Chelsea have signed the Cannes defender Laurent Charvet on loan for the rest of the season with an option to buy him.

Notts County have turned down a £200,000 bid from Sheffield United for the midfielder Shaun Derry. The Third Division club's chairman Derek Davis said: "As we found with Mark Draper and Tommy Johnson there comes a time when you have to consider whether it's fair to prevent a good young player from bettering himself. But we really don't want Derry to go."

Players at Doncaster yesterday said they were sick of being made fools of and refused to go to Urf Geller for "brain training". The psychic had offered to help Rovers, who have won twice in 30 games, climb off the bottom of the Third Division using positive thinking.

"They have been in touch with the PFA and are refusing to go," said the Doncaster manager Mark Weaver. "I can't see that it would have done any harm. Some big clubs pay Urf thousands of pounds for assistance but he was willing to help us for nothing."

Adams returns from injury and may face Middlesbrough in cup

TONY ADAMS seems to have shaken off his back and ankle injuries and may resume the Arsenal captaincy in their fourth-round FA Cup tie at Middlesbrough Saturday. "There's no pain. I feel great," he said yesterday after coming through a gruelling 90 minutes for the reserves as they beat Chelsea reserves 1-0 on a midweek of a pitch at Enfield. "It was important to get 90 minutes under my belt and important to get in a few ticks. It's the boss's decision when I come back, but it went well and we'll see if there's any reaction over the next 24 hours."

Adams' presence against his former team-mate Paul Merson at the Riverside Stadium on Saturday will be vital, since Arsenal's other England defender Martin Keown is out for two weeks after pulling a hamstring in the 2-2 draw at Coventry.

Ian Wright also has a hamstring injury and 13-year-old Nicolas Anelka is likely to take his place alongside Dennis Bergkamp up front.

Speaking to Sorensen, which Walsall's chairman Jeff Bonser did for 15 hours over a week before hiring him in June, is believing a man unkindly portrayed as Danish drifter, an ex-thamesaleman who somehow turned up in Tamworth. Seeing Sorensen, hardly a Weight Watchers competition winner, presents more of a problem. It is difficult to reconcile the 42-year-old with the slim Bruges player who confronted Liverpool at Wembley in the 1978 European Cup final.

From Bruges, who lost that final 1-0, he went to Twente Enschede, Feyenoord and Ajax, playing under the legendary Ernst Hapfel, the legendary Johan Cruyff and others. It is little wonder Sorensen has a real sense of footballing self-worth, which extends to management. "I had many years at the highest level," he says. "I watched many games last season and analysed the styles and tactics. Soccer is my passion."

Sorensen briefly coached a Portuguese club, Portimonense, before leaving football and setting up on the Algarve. It may have been an idyllic life but hardly the grooming for the colder realities of the Nationwide. Twelve Denmark caps or not, he had been out of the game for eight years.

Even his adaptation to life here after marrying a Midlands girl and his very good English did not overcome the credibility gap when he offered to help out Tamworth.



In full bloom... the Cheltenham Town midfielder Bob Bloomer (left) tussles with Reading's Phil Parkinson at Elm Park

PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL COLE

FA Cup, third-round replay: Reading 2, Cheltenham Town 1

Reading enjoy age before Booty

Martin Thorpe

A GOAL 18 minutes from time by Martin Booty last night secured Reading the less-than-glamorous prize of a fourth-round tie at Cardiff.

The hopes of Cheltenham's net-timers were plundered just as they were dreaming of extra-time and a possible penalty shoot-out after the ageless Clive Walker had brought them level early in the second half.

Stevens are now the only non-league side left in the Cup but for Cheltenham to have got this far was a reflection of what a great season this homey Gloucestershire side are enjoying. Currently

second in the Vauxhall Conference, having won promotion only last season, they started last night with just two defeats in 30 games.

The Robins so very nearly pulled off another victory in the original game of this tie, with Reading only equalising 19 minutes from time.

But last night the non-league side were without their suspended midfielder Lee Howells, who was outstanding in the first tie, and understandably were soon under the cosh.

Reading, on a high after Saturday's satisfying win at their near-neighbours Swindon, went close through Jason Bowen and Phil Parkinson before Cheltenham's goalkeeper Steve Book,

nephew of the former Manchester City player Tony, had to punch away a header shot from James Lambert that was a sitter at the far post from the resulting corner.

Reading finally scored on 38 minutes when Bowen's run forward ended with a pass to Trevor Morley. Though he turned 37 in March, Morley showed he still has a lethal finishing touch by slotting home from 14 yards. He had also scored the late equaliser in the first game.

Cheltenham's chances were few. Nicky Hammond in the Reading goal saved well from Dale Watkins' shot and just before half-time went down smartly to block a shot from Walker after he had broken

clear down the right. The Elm Park atmosphere became curiously underwhelming as the home fans watched their side's progress in contained silence and the voices of the 1,500 Cheltenham supporters died away after the goal.

Indeed, Reading looked to be taking a hold of the game with their superior technique but had a shot across their bows four minutes into the second half when Jason Eaton drew a good save from Hammond. Three minutes later Cheltenham equalised.

Watkins swung in a corner from the left which Eaton, at the far post, headed down to Walker close to the other upright. The 40-year-old forced the ball over the line to the

delight of the massed red-and-white ranks behind that goal.

Minutes later, however, the veteran's years caught up with him when he had to limp off injured and was substituted by Keith Knight, a former Reading man.

Immediately his old side went close to recapturing the lead when Book was forced to save well from Lambert. On 72 minutes, however, Reading produced the killer goal when a Lambert corner was cleared only as far as Booty 30 yards out and the full-back fired a shot past Book.

Reading (4-4-2): Hammond; Book, Davies, Searl, Swales; Bowen, Parkinson, Hodges, Lambert, Morley, Lovell. Cheltenham (4-4-2): Book, Duff, Freeman, Banks, Victory, Watkins, Crisp, Bloomer, Walker, Evans. Referee: K. Lash (Wolverhampton).

Tamworth's Danish porker in flight of fancy

FA Cup profile: Russell Thomas on Jan Sorensen, Walsall's surprise manager, out to blow smoke-rings round Alex Ferguson

SAVE for thousands of Manchester United worshippers no one will mind on Saturday if a chunky Dane paces the touchline and blows a cheeky smoke-ring towards Old Trafford's emperor standing on his viewing podium. Jan Sorensen means no disrespect; he is fond of a joke and a genuine footballing challenge.

Sorensen combines the light and serious touch in his improbable role as Walsall's manager, a responsibility that will be exposed to its most inquisitive glare in the seeming mismatch of England's aristocrats and visitors from the wrong side of the tracks and the wrong half of the Second Division.

Will Walsall succumb to culture shock in the amphitheatre of 55,000? Sorensen says: "I'm not losing any sleep over Old Trafford."

Speaking to Sorensen, which Walsall's chairman Jeff Bonser did for 15 hours over a week before hiring him in June, is believing a man unkindly portrayed as Danish drifter, an ex-thamesaleman who somehow turned up in Tamworth. Seeing Sorensen, hardly a Weight Watchers competition winner, presents more of a problem. It is difficult to reconcile the 42-year-old with the slim Bruges player who confronted Liverpool at Wembley in the 1978 European Cup final.

From Bruges, who lost that final 1-0, he went to Twente Enschede, Feyenoord and Ajax, playing under the legendary Ernst Hapfel, the legendary Johan Cruyff and others. It is little wonder Sorensen has a real sense of footballing self-worth, which extends to management. "I had many years at the highest level," he says. "I watched many games last season and analysed the styles and tactics. Soccer is my passion."

'Culture shock? I'm not losing any sleep over Old Trafford'

for the colder realities of the Nationwide. Twelve Denmark caps or not, he had been out of the game for eight years.

Even his adaptation to life here after marrying a Midlands girl and his very good English did not overcome the credibility gap when he offered to help out Tamworth.

Sorensen enjoys the good things in life but wants to see the employment record straight. "I worked for a company in Portugal which sold villas ranging from £100,000 to £500,000. You could hardly call that a success. Then we took on a pub but it didn't last long because the job didn't challenge me mentally. As for ten-pin bowling, I was a sales and marketing manager for Europe, the Middle East and Africa for the world's biggest ten-pin company. That's not exactly running a local bowling alley."

He admits he was a little-known foreigner to the Midlands footballing public but the Bescot board liked his ideal — of pure, attacking football — and valued his contacts on the Continent. That eased the way to Walsall of two Frenchmen on free transfers — the striker Roger Ball, the division's 19-goal leading scorer, and the midfielder Jean-François "Jeff" Peron. West Ham and Nottingham Forest have watched the pair

closely. Newly-rich Fulham are the latest to look at Peron. Ball, 32 and older brother of Basile, has the ring of confidence. Like his friend Eric Anzures, he insists on wearing the No. 7 shirt. This, at Old Trafford, is tempting unfavourable comparison.

But, as Sorensen says, he not only scores goals but creates space for others, notably Andy Watson, whose two goals accounted for Peterborough in the last round and who scored in the Coca-Cola Cup wins over Forest and Sheffield United.

All that, a 2-0 victory at Lincoln United of the League (average goals 123) and a starting 7-0 win at Macclesfield, recently from the Conference, have hardly prepared Walsall for Old Trafford (55,145). "We've won four on the trot," Sorensen says. "and we won't be going there short of confidence. Defeat is by no means inevitable." Some 8,500 Saddlers' fans are hitching a ride on the dream.

Williams let off with ban for one game

COVENTRY's Paul Williams has escaped with a one-match FA suspension for his sending-off in Saturday's fourth-round FA Cup tie at Lincoln United. The defender's overall ban is for two matches as it was his second red card of the season, following last month's dismissal against Aston Villa.

Williams would have drawn a three-match ban had the referee Steve Lodge interpreted his challenge on Dennis Bergkamp on the edge of the penalty area as "serious foul play". But Lodge, asked to review the incident video by Coventry's manager Gordon Strachan, decided his tackle on the visitors' striker came into the less serious category of "denying a goal-scoring opportunity".

It will be Williams' third ban of the season and, with two red cards and nine cautions, he has the Premiership's worst disciplinary record — though he is adamant that he has "never gone out to deliberately hurt anyone".

Coach resigns over Baggio row

THE Bologna coach Renzo Ulivieri, who outraged supporters when he dropped Roberto Baggio for Sunday's Serie A defeat by Juventus, resigned yesterday. Baggio walked out on Saturday after being told he would be on the bench against his old club.

Meanwhile, Fiorentina yesterday completed his £25 million transfer from Newcastle to his former club Parma. The Colombian international signed a contract until June 2001.

Team talk

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TheGuardian INTERACTIVE

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Rugby Union

Lynagh set to go at end of season

Robert Armstrong

MICHAEL LYNAGH is expected to announce his forthcoming retirement today. The Saracens fly-half, who played for Australia in three World Cups, will almost certainly see out the remainder of his three-year contract at Vicarage Road before calling it a day in May.

One of the most accomplished No. 10s in Test rugby, Lynagh may well play his last game on the same day as Philippe Salla. The Frenchman, 36 next month, has not turned out for Saracens since late October due to a niggling back injury through his comeback is imminent.

Lynagh, 34 and ever present in league games this season, has made a huge contribution to Saracens' rise to second place in the Premiership. Apart from his consistent goal-kicking, he has contributed the kind of crisp, accurate distribution that fits in perfectly with the fast, open style fostered by the player-coach Francois Pienaar.

Saracens have been linked with Neil Jenkins, the Lions full-back, who is under contract to the Welsh Rugby Union as well as Pontypridd, but they are more likely to look to the southern hemisphere, given the shortage of quality No. 10s in the United Kingdom.

David Knox, the experienced Australian fly-half, is thought to be keen to try his luck in the northern hemisphere and Alain Penard, Brive's 35-year-old international, has recently engaged a London agent.

The former Wallabies captain, who is the top scorer in international rugby with 811 points, will be hard to follow. His clubness under pressure, his nose for the line (which brought him 17 tries in 72 Tests) and his friendliness off the pitch have combined to make Lynagh a role model for the young supporters. Saracens are seeking in Watford.

Within minutes of Saracens completing a record 50-21 league victory over Bath last month Mark Evans, Saracens' director of rugby, reminded everyone that Lynagh had been one of the outstanding players on the field. Evans said media criticism that the Australian had joined Saracens merely to boost his pension was wide of the mark. He might have added that the Queenslander will be satisfied with nothing less than the Premiership title.

The Rugby Football Union's disciplinary panel has postponed its hearing on the citing of the Bath prop Kevin Yates by London Scottish, following the ear-biting suffered by Simon Fenn, until after Bath's own hearing on February 3.

Motor Sport

Burns keeps McRae in his wing mirrors

David Williams

WIN or lose, England's Richard Burns looks certain to be greeted as the outstanding driver of this year's Monte Carlo rally.

By holding third place at his first attempt at one of the world's most specialised rallies he has exceeded his Mitsubishi team's wildest expectations.

Burns will be under pressure to defend his position in the final leg of the rally today, but so far he has taken everything in his stride, from the most wintry conditions in 11 years to the burden of team leadership after Tommi Makinen rolled his car on ice yesterday morning.

Makinen was flown home to Finland and will undergo tests in a Helsinki hospital today. "He appears to be still suffering from the after-effects of pneumonia," a team spokesman said.

The bitterly cold but dry conditions have tilted the odds against Burns's Michelin-equipped Mitsubishi, in favour of the Subaru, which have Pirelli tyres. Dry roads may well permit McRae, now within 10 seconds of Burns, to salvage a degree of performance on the ice, when his winter tyres gave no grip at all.

Carlos Sainz of Spain, driving a Toyota, has a clear lead over Finland's Juha Kankkunen (Ford) and is set to score his third Monte Carlo victory — unless the weather changes abruptly yet again.

SportsGuardian

Liverpool's striker settles it before Shearer makes his entrance

Premiership: Liverpool 1, Newcastle United 0

Owen starts with finishing touch

David Lacey

A FINAL half-hour of Alan Shearer for Newcastle United threatened the early lead Michael Owen's superb shot had given Liverpool at Anfield last night. That and periods of slipshod passing from Roy Evans's side as well as the familiar nerve-racked moments in defence, with David James suffering another error-prone evening in goal.

But for the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in the early hours Newcastle would have travelled to Anfield on a Sunday afternoon at the end of August hoping to show that, despite the loss of Shearer, they were still a team with title potential.

Instead they turned up on a cold January night as people wondered if the promise of an early return by Shearer to regular football would inspire Kenny Dalglish's side after an eight-match slump alleviated only by Saturday's late 2-1 win over Bolton.

For the second time in four days Shearer started on the bench, along with Temur Ketsbaia, the Georgian striker whose celebration of his last-minute winner on Saturday could have been mistaken for conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace.

For Liverpool the evening always had more to offer. Manchester United's latest defeat at Southampton the night before had not made them catchable but they were within sight, and Liverpool were positioned to join Blackburn, five points behind, as the champions' closest pursuers.

With most of Newcastle's scoring power among the substitutes and Darren Peacock and David Baty suspended, Newcastle were below strength for and aft. Much favoured Liverpool then, not least that they had recently beaten the opposition at St James' Park in both league and Coca-Cola Cup.

Dalglish's response was to play John Barnes in a lone role up front against his old team, detail Aaron Hughes to keep track of Steve McManaman, and present Liverpool with a mass of bodies. Not surprisingly Newcastle spent the early part of the match



Low-running Norwegian... Liverpool's Oyvind Leonhardsen steals away from the Newcastle winger Keith Gillespie at Anfield last night

PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS KINNARD

searching for the ball. Liverpool should have scored on six minutes. After solid work by Paul Ince, Oyvind Leonhardsen's close-range shot was blocked by Shaka Hislop and Fowler scooped the rebound into the Kop.

Encouraged by this escape, Newcastle opened up the right flank for the pace of Keith Gillespie and as their midfield began to offer

Barnes closer support Liverpool's cover wobbled a little. But after 16 minutes a marvellous goal by Michael Owen put this into perspective.

Once lost possession but quickly won it back before finding Jason McAteer, who floated a centre beyond the last Newcastle defender for Owen to control the ball with a touch and then beat Hislop with a beautifully struck,

cleverly flighted shot which dipped over Hislop and into the net off the crossbar.

Liverpool's shaky defence, including James, all but allowed Newcastle a goal just before the half-hour. James charged beyond the penalty to stop Jon Dahl Tomasson and then failed to hold the low shot from Gillespie which followed. Tomasson ran the ball into the net but the outside

flag had already gone up against him.

Galvanised by Robert Lee, Newcastle threatened to wrest midfield from Ince and Jamie Redknapp. The trend continued after half-time and as Liverpool's movements began to break down around a subdued Fowler the contest was much more even.

Liverpool urgently needed another goal. Fowler might

have provided it in the 57th minute when, having found McManaman on the right with a raking pass, he had time to compose himself as he ran on to the return. But his shot flew high past the left-hand post.

Cometh the hour, cometh Shearer, whose presence immediately added pace and power to Newcastle's attack. But he still needed proper service and while those around

him had an extra spring in their step the crosses and final passes still lacked quality.

Liverpool (4-4-2): James; McAteer, Maitland, Bala, Harrison; McManaman, Redknapp, Ince, Leonhardsen, Owen, Fowler. Newcastle United (4-5-1): Hislop; Watson, Pearce, Pisters, Hughes; Gillespie, Barton, Lee, Tomasson, Shearer (Ketsbaia, Smith); Barnes (Shearer, 61). Referee: G Barber (Kingston-upon-Thames).

Savo on transfer list as fans cut up rough

Peter White

SAVO MILOSEVIC, the Aston Villa striker, yesterday paid the price for spitting towards the club's supporters at Blackburn on Saturday when he was put on the transfer list.

Villa's manager Brian Little, who initially refused to discuss Milosevic's show of petulance during the 5-0 defeat at Ewood Park, met his chairman Doug Ellis before confirming that the 25-year-old Serb, who has scored six goals this season, was on his way out of the club.

Little said: "After speaking with the chairman, the board of directors and the player, and studying video evidence, I spoke to Milosevic who made it clear he regretted his actions. However, they were not acceptable to this football club, and he has been placed on the transfer list with immediate effect."

The Villa manager would not reveal whether Milosevic, who joined Villa from Partizan Belgrade in the summer of 1995 for £2.5 million, had also been fined, although it seemed likely he will forfeit around £10,000, representing the maximum penalty of two weeks' wages.

Little and Ellis will be hoping that their strong disciplinary stance will help appease the club's supporters who had earlier expressed shock and anger at the player's blatant show of dissent. Fans jammed the switchboard of a local radio station in Birmingham demanding that the Yugoslav international be sacked.

Dave Woodhall, the editor of the fanzine Heroes and Villains, said: "People are very upset about his actions. His sort of behaviour is inexcusable — the worst thing in football. It's a shame this happened because the supporters have defended Savo up until Saturday. There is no way he can say he has been hounded out."



Paul Hayward

Battle fatigue is only threat to United's young guns

MANCHESTER United's defeat at Southampton on Monday night was bliss for those whose job it is to tell us the Premiership is the finest league in football. It sustained the illusion that in Carlingland everybody is more or less equal. The truth is that United have long since disappeared over the horizon with their sponsored backside on fire.

Southampton deserve all the credit they got for ambushing the champions for a third consecutive year but nobody can seriously argue that it made much difference to the title race. Some encouragement

may be taken from the fact that United have lost one more game than they had at the corresponding point last season, but on a night when they wasted more chances than Jamie Blandford it was impossible to mistake the look of amused contentment on Alex Ferguson's face. Give to the needy, and all that.

In Italy Internazionale and Juventus are grappling over the Serie A title and in Spain the ancient struggle between Real Madrid and Barcelona is fiercer than an Andalusian summer. Here the form of Chelsea and Liverpool is much too undulating for them to be considered championship challengers while the resurgent Rovers of Blackburn are probably not as good as Roy Hodgson's coaching skills might imply.

It's beyond dispute now that the upper echelons of English football are dividing into three tiers: a famous five, a struggling seven and a dirty dozen or so of clubs stuck on the bungee ride between Premiership and Nationwide League. The three teams promoted from the First Division last year will probably go straight back down and the three that went down are on their way back up. Barnsley, Bolton and Crystal Palace fill three of the four bottom Premiership places. Below the fold Middlesbrough, Nottingham Forest and Sunderland look the strongest candidates for promotion.

In the supposed utopia they aspire to, the 20 teams are actually strung out like a Grand National field. Southampton's ground holds 15,000; United's can pack in over 56,000. United have to choose between Philip Neville and Dennis Irwin at left-back; The Saints have Francis Benali.

Loathing Man United was starting to become a national sub-culture, part of the British intolerance towards success. But even that is wearing off now that United are less combative and self-regarding than in the days of Paul Ince and Eric Cantona. Roy Keane's absence helps. Only the pea-hearted could fail to admire how United's youngsters bonded at The Dell. Ryan Giggs's early promise is being gloriously fulfilled.

COURTESY of Rupert Murdoch, Premier League clubs have just completed the most ferocious spending cycle in British sporting history. The effects are more patchy than the lousy eaters would have us believe. Imagine any English team below United playing Inter or Juventus, Barcelona or Real Madrid, home and away this season. One win in four would be about the best the Premiership might end up with.

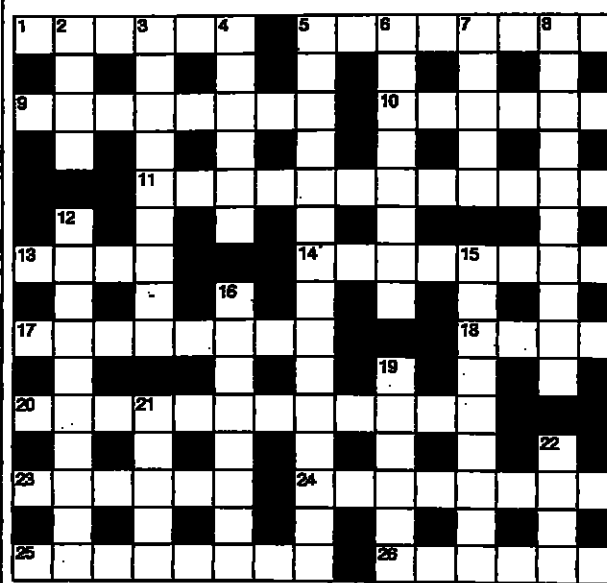
These are emotive days for United, who have scored more league goals than any of their rivals and conceded fewer. Yesterday was the fourth anniversary of Sir Matt Busby's death. On February 6, the day before United play Bolton at Old Trafford, a service in Manchester Cathedral will mark the 40th anniversary of the Munich air disaster in which 21 people were killed. Forty years on the spirit of the Busby Babes is replicated in Ferguson's zestful side.

This year's championship has already mapped out its route, but there are grounds for thinking United's hegemony may be weakened next autumn. As many as 13 of the current squad can expect to be in full-blooded action at this summer's World Cup. They are: Peter Schmeichel (Denmark), Henning Berg, Ronny Johnsen and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (Norway), Jordi Cruyff (Holland, possibly) and the England contingent of Gary Pallister, the Nevilles, Paul Scholes, David Beckham, Nicky Butt, Andy Cole and Teddy Sheringham. By the time they get back in July, pre-season training will already have started.

Fatigue, and trips to The Dell, might be the only thing that can stop them. At least poor Giggs, a Welshman, will get a summer break from all that rushing around.

Guardian Crossword No 21,177

Set by Araucaria



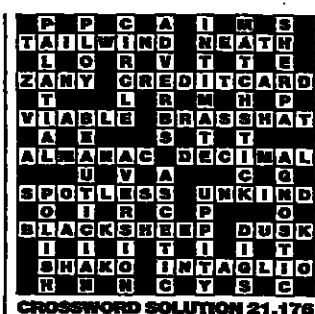
Across

- 1 Busy Lizzie's relation backs arts graduates where science is done (6)
- 5 Message after journey to activate alarm? (4-4)
- 9 Steel nut used to disturb (8)
- 10 Some of the rulers return without money for election (6)

Down

- 2 4's sister maybe at the BBC? (4)
- 3 Confectioners could supply these in exchange (5,4)
- 4 See 7
- 5 Inferior order in crime on non-U list from 7 13 4 (3,3,3)
- 6 Unwelcome entry so split to enter uselessly (6)
- 7 13-4 Chronometer and lepidopterist entertained the young of 11 (5,4,6)
- 8 Manage selling point and go the opposite way (3,7)
- 12 Make love to Shakespeare with surprised expression (4,3,3)
- 15 Wee house with drab exterior surrounded by gas point (3,3,3)
- 16 Last year's winner topped by supporter (8)

- 20 You may do it so, don't push your luck: you shouldn't even have started? (4,3,5)
- 23 Climbed clear of tartar like fish (6)
- 24 Up with the lark, these winners madly buy drams (8)
- 25 Sassanach has little money and unfinished seat (8)
- 26 Some born at Easter are far from plain (8)

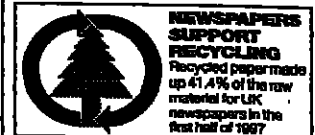


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- 19 I make music way before love (6)
- 21 Half the class gets a third of the glory (5)
- 22 Change 18? (4)

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